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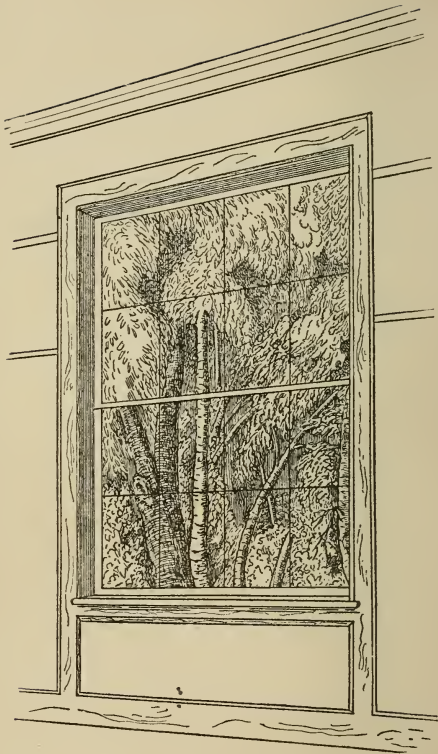


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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.



A CALM OUTLOOK.

A. M. S. Co. Boston

HOME INTERIORS.

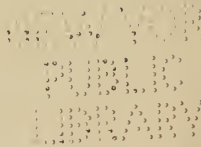
BY

E. C. GARDNER,

AUTHOR OF

"HOMES, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM," "ILLUSTRATED HOMES,"
ETC.

With Illustrations.

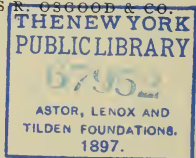


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J. R.

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PREFACE.



HAVE not attempted in these pages to indicate a royal road to the summit of fine art in the finishing and decorating of houses, but rather to plant simple stepping-stones for those who are likely to be left somewhat behind in the headlong race for greater refinement of taste and a higher degree of æsthetic culture, — a race not without its dangers and drawbacks, but, though sometimes false in its motives, always hopeful in its promise.

Without the aid and encouragement of her who for many years has been the light of my own home, neither this book nor its predecessors would have been written ; and any helpfulness that may be found in them, any merit they may have, either in style or in matter, is due to her careful suggestions and faithful criticism.

E. C. G.

SPRINGFIELD, December, 1877.





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HOME INTERIORS:

LEAVES FROM AN ARCHITECT'S DIARY.



FIRST DAY.

PAPER-HANGINGS.

IT may be owing to the hard times, perhaps it is the result of "Art Education" in Massachusetts, or, possibly, nothing more or less than the working of the everlasting law of growth that none of us can help or hinder, but, whatever the immediate or remote cause, we, the people, seem possessed at present with a mania for "Interior Decoration"; not of our bodies, nor yet of our souls, but of

our domestic habitations. When I read the instructions and dogmatisms on the subject, listen to the discussions, look at the pictures, witness the achievements, and try to answer the queries propounded, I am wellnigh distracted, and thank my stars that the windows of my study look out into the calmness of an impenetrable forest—impenetrable by sight, I mean—not a chimney or a turret can I see, not even a rail-fence or a rustic chair, only the gray boles of the trees hiding and retreating in dim perspective, dark ferns, and the inimitable canopy of green leaves and golden sunlight.

But these art-yearnings relating to our interiors must not be quenched. Quite the reverse. I would stir them to greater activity and discontent if I could, and may as well begin to-night, here and now. Every day brings its own conundrum, the solution of which is more important than prognosticating the future, or prodding into

the past. It is therefore resolved that the actual experiences of each day for a single month shall be herein chronicled. Not for the benefit of artists, architects, amateurs, or professional decorators, those who are wise or famous or both, nor yet for the "great unwashed," — until a man has learned the practical art of cleanliness, finer pearls are worse than wasted before him, — but for the "great unthinking," to whom it has never occurred that they can do otherwise than follow meekly in the paths of their uninteresting predecessors; who do what they are taught, and imitate what they see, without asking whether the teaching and the examples are wise and right: chiefly, in short, for those who would gratify the longing for pleasant and interesting homes without incurring burdens of debt, dishonesty, or degrading toil.

Dante was, doubtless, a most neat and orderly person, being a poet, but it is certain that he

knew nothing about house-cleaning, neither had he any personal knowledge of New England weather. The two taken together produce an infernal result, than which nothing more intense in the way of purgatory could possibly be desired. House-cleaning, like death and taxes, is among the inevitables. It is also periodically invariable, like the monsoons of the Indian Ocean and Encke's comet. The weather is inevitable likewise, but how, when, or where any particular phase will appear, no mortal being can tell twenty-four hours beforehand. Old Probabilities is safe at twenty-three and a half, but fails miserably at twenty-four. This year two or three weeks of May have dropped out of the calendar, and the first of May house-cleaning comes in the last of May weather. Of course the house-cleaning is all right, — the weather all wrong.

For this reason I have made a masterly retreat into the northwest corner of the house, in a vain

endeavor to hide from the abomination of desolation that prevails within and the sweltering heat without, from which there is no escape.

About eleven this morning, Mrs. Douglass came in, fanning herself with her last year's hat retrimmed with mandarin yellow, and sank exhausted into the only unoccupied chair in the house. Could I and would I come over and tell her what to do with Aunt Mary's room? "It is to be Mollie's room now, and must of course be repapered, redraped, and rejuvenated altogether."

"To-morrow will answer?"

"To-morrow will *not* answer. Every room in the house is topsy-turvy."

"Excellent! Then why not put one or two of them right side up to-day, lest the governor's wife should call to-morrow?"

"I will tell you why, precisely, if you will have the goodness to listen. We've bought new mat-

ting for the drawing-room, to begin with, the old matting is to be laid in our room, and our carpet is going into Aunt Mary's—I mean Mollie's. The furniture in the guest-room needs painting, and I've given that to Mollie. Then I shall put the north-chamber set into the guest-room, and get new for the north chamber. Israel is determined to move the two small book-cases from the library—which you know is overflowing—into the drawing-room, and if he does that I shall transfer some of the vases and engravings from the dining-room—they ought never to have been there—into the library, and carry the large fruit-piece from the hall to the dining-room. There! Do you comprehend the situation? Do you see that it is impossible to touch a thing in the house that is n't waiting for that room? It is like a row of tumbling bricks. The operations of the entire household are blockaded by a roll of paper."



DESPAIR.

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We found Mollie sitting on a Saratoga trunk in the middle of her newly acquired territory, and looking very much like Marius surveying the ruins of Carthage. The old paper positively refused to be peeled from the walls, and Mollie wept at the thought of putting the new over the old, dark hangings that have been absorbing mould and damp, germs of disease, contagion, and nobody knows what other invisible and obnoxious elements, for a quarter of a century.

“It must and shall come off,” cried the distracted maiden. “My beautiful new paper shall not be used as a mere overskirt for this horrid old stuff. It may not actually show through, but I shall think I see it all the time, and if I must have a skeleton he shall not be spread all over the walls, but hang in the closet where he belongs.”

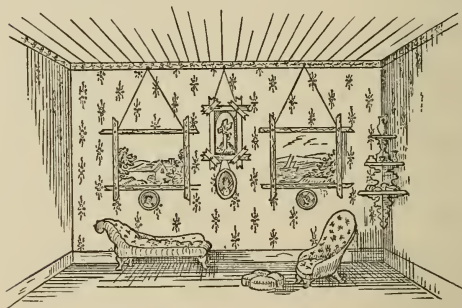
For once sentiment and common-sense are in sweet accord; the walls are to be doused with

hot water, and scraped with cold steel until they are as clean as a Dutch kitchen. This wise decision in favor of cleanliness having been reached, we gave ourselves up to a rapt study of the beautiful, as embodied in a dozen or two rolls and detached samples of paper-hangings. What a delightful thing it would be if the question of cost never entered into a matter of taste! But even with paper, that most abundant and democratic material, it makes a perceptible difference whether the price per roll is told in dollars or cents, a difference in estimates rather than in actual results, — for paper is paper and will be nothing but paper to the end of time, however much it may be illuminated with gold and mica, poisoned with arsenic, polished with paste, or feathered with felt. Like our own righteousness it is filthy rags at best, and whose looks upon it as anything better is not clairvoyant.

However, Mollie's room is to be papered, rags or not, and until the selection is made — until the bear begins to bite the dog — there is a deadlock in the reconstruction of the household.

I suppose that, omitting the foolish following after fashion which is the normal condition of most human beings in regard to all things in which fashion is possible, the next mortal weakness that prevents a wise and tasteful selection of paper-hangings is the inability to imagine the effect in gross of that which is only seen piecemeal. By way of moral instance, most sensible people would be appalled if their own little pet habits, meannesses, and frailties were multiplied by universal humanity and displayed on the broad canopy of heaven. Mrs. Douglass expressed a perception of this fact — as to paper — by saying that she has “most generally always” found papers that look well in samples to be ugly on the wall, and *vice versa*. This is quite true

if by those "that look well in sample" she means those having pretty and interesting designs in bright colors. Lining the walls of a room with several hundreds of such pictures is painful to an artist and disquieting to everybody. Before



PICTURES AND PICTURES.

chromos and heliotypes were invented, and before rustic walnut frames grew on blackberry-bushes, as they do now, it was very entertaining to see landscapes and architectural designs, sporting scenes and brilliant bouquets, sprinkled

at regular intervals around the room; but to cover the walls with pictures of one sort without frames, and overlay these with pictures of another kind with frames is destruction to both. Happily Miss Mollie appreciates this general principle, and has set her heart upon a quiet sort of a drabbish-brown without a conspicuous figure of any sort. We talked of plain papers, but the cheap, plain papers are not what they promise to be, they soil so easily, the joinings will show, a little dab of paste is an incurable blot, and the tints are apt to disappoint. One may as well have plain paint or even kalsomine. So plain paper was vetoed, and a pretty selection at twenty-five cents per roll was quickly made,—a small set figure having only two colors, almost but not quite one shade of the same.

And now came the tug of war. Mollie has set her heart upon a *dado*, mainly, I think, because it is a new revelation in the use of

paper-hangings, — new to her ; in fact, an old fashion revived, and a very good one, too, though I'm not sure that there can be any logical reason for it in a bedroom, — a frieze seems more in order. One can lie in bed and watch a procession of pilgrims, peacocks, or hippopotami around the top of the room with great comfort, but the dado, especially behind the bed, the wardrobe, and the dressing-table, is thrown away.

On looking through the samples of paper-hangings that may be collected at any moderately extensive establishment, one would suppose that he has only to wave a wand, when, lo ! any required color, cost, style, and pattern will appear. But just try it once. From the experience of to-day learn all. The wall-screen was quickly chosen, — the quiet drabbish-brown that is to form the background for the pictures, for the tall furniture, for Mollie herself when she

is at home, and which will cover the wall from within three feet of the floor to sixteen inches of the ceiling. Below this screen the paper must be darker, richer in appearance, and either harmonious with it in color, or happily contrasting. Then there must be a band of some sort separating the two. The sixteen-inch zone at the top must be, like Mollie herself, pretty, delicate, and lively. It must have a border at the top and some bond of color to indicate its junction with the wall-screen. It is wonderfully easy to describe how it ought to be done. We found the work itself a more complicated affair. Every pattern we had was good by itself, — several of them “matched” admirably, and when paper-hangings do match the match is surely made in heaven. But though we rung as many changes on them as could be rung on a dozen Swiss bells, — several hundred millions, — I have just come home in disgrace, leaving Mrs.

Douglass in despair, Mollie in tears, and the whole house in a "state to behold."

To-morrow we are to make a raid on the paper warehouses.





SECOND DAY.

WALLS, FLOORS, AND BLINDS.

MEDIOCRITY is as easily attained in paper-hangings as in everything else. To rise above that we must watch and fight and pray, — if work is prayer. Whether the result is worth the pains may be a question. I think it is. One may as well go and be a brother to the sluggish clod at once as to take passage in the freight-train of “commonplace.”

We must have made ourselves terrible to the paper-dealers, this morning, by our persistent research and positive refusal to accept what was not satisfactory. Of course we admitted, what was true, that the hangings were elegant and

tasteful, but most salesmen seem incapable of comprehending the fact that a fifteen-cent paper may be infinitely more appropriate for a given purpose, and therefore more beautiful, than one that costs ten times as much, nor could they conceive the state of mind that decidedly prefers an unfashionable color. By the way, I wonder how it happens that the lilies of the field retain their popularity without changing the forms and colors in which they are arrayed!

We found that the paper selected yesterday for the central part of the walls fell in love at sight with a dark brown, having a delicate gilt scroll running over it, and we performed the nuptials on the spot with the aid of a brown stripe cut from a fifteen-cent roll. Its color was perfect, and we were quite indifferent to its quality. But I'm getting ahead of the story. We first tried to find ready-made borders that would officiate in uniting, for better or worse,

the grand divisions,—dado, screen, and frieze. They all proved “for worse” with one excep-

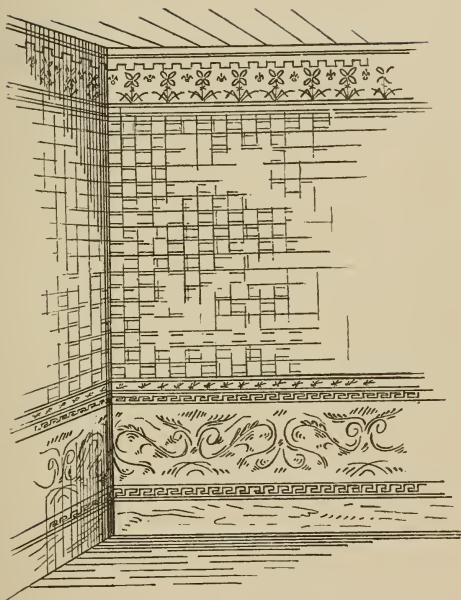


“THE LILIES, HOW THEY GROW!”

tion, which cost twenty-five cents a yard. Twenty-five cents is n't a large sum, but if the border must go two or three times around

the room, at twenty or thirty yards a time, the final result is somewhat formidable. One roll of cheap striped paper will furnish several bands more or less decorated, and far more serviceable than the gaudy, self-asserting borders that are "gotten up for the occasion regardless of expense." If the manufacturers of paper-hangings would only give us, in common rolls, simple belts of color, with perhaps a line of gilt, black or velvet at one edge, and leave the buyer to cut them up to suit his fancy, it would be a grand thing in a small way for the noble art of interior decoration by means of paper. The plain paper will not answer as well, partly because an entire roll — the smallest quantity that can be bought — may be five times as much as is needed, and chiefly on account of the greater difficulty of cutting it into strips of uniform width.

For the frieze, that is, the sixteen inches at the



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top of the room, Mollie found a paper, the ground a trifle darker than the wall-screen, the figure lively and clear in rich browns, with here and there a dash of crimson and gilt. A stripe cut from the fifteen-cent roll will unite this frieze with the paper below it; another bounds the frieze at the top, and is itself finished by a narrow band of plain crimson flock. The room has no cornice of wood or plaster. The stripe at the top of the frieze under the crimson has a row of small spots — stars, or something of the sort — that are to be cut out alternately, making a kind of dentil course. There is also a narrow fret to be cut from the inexhaustible fifteen-center, that is appended to the “regular” border at the top of the dado, and still another marks the junction of the dado with the wood base at the floor. As usual, the most expensive item could best be spared, — the orthodox border. A simpler band would have been more harmonious and less likely



WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.

to become wearisome. In answer to her mother's allusion to this extravagance, Mollie, who had staked her happiness on this belt of golden scrolls and shining dragon-flies, promptly proposed to sacrifice a spring bonnet in order to

make the accounts balance. She then summed up the cost as follows:—

8 rolls for wall-screen at 25 c.....	\$ 2.00
2 rolls for dado at 40 c.....	.80
2 rolls striped paper for borders at 15 c.....	.30
2 yards crimson flock for borders at 35 c.....	.70
25 yards dragon-flies for borders at 25 c.....	6.25
	<hr/>
	\$ 10.05
Less spring bonnet.....	6.25
	<hr/>
Net cost.....	\$ 3.80

“As the pieces will be short I might put it on myself,” said Mollie, “but if I hire a man it will cost four dollars more. Call it eight dollars for the room.”

We agreed that this was a very moderate outlay, but I suggested an additional item of twenty-seven dollars, which ought to be included to pay for the time, board, travelling expenses, and talents of three persons one and a half days each.

“What a base idea!” said Mollie, — “who would think of pecuniary reward for participating in a work of art? This painful research has been a rare and blessed privilege. A thing of beauty is a joy forever, and my lovely room would n’t have been possible without this protracted and distracting study of tints and tones, hues and movements. We have made a triumphant success, our fame is established; let no mercenary thoughts intrude!”

So we all came home happy, — Mollie in an-

icipation of the charming room, Mrs. Douglass because the stone that blocked the wheels of Juggernaut was at last removed, and I because I was hungry and it was dinner-time.

Instead of trying to invent a license law that will make it a crime for one man to do what is quite right for another, I wish our legislators would establish an hour at which all citizens of the Commonwealth should dine. On my list of friends are those who take their midday meal at twelve, M., twelve-thirty, P. M., at one, and so on at every hour and half-hour until it is time for honest folks to be in bed. I could easily dine for six or eight consecutive hours by going from one friend to another, and seldom finish a square dinner at home without being interrupted by some one who has either dined already, or expects to get home in season for dinner.

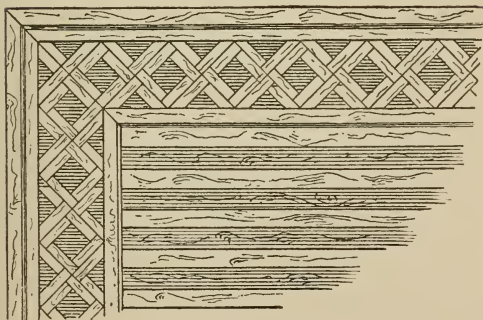
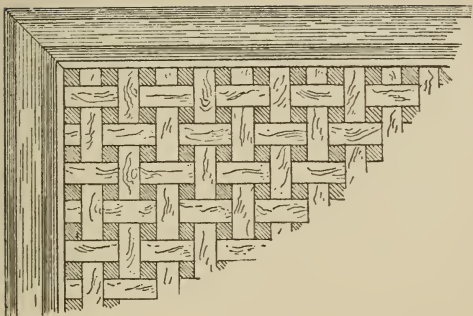
To-day I was called up stairs just before des-

sert, and found Mr. Jackson with a lamentable tale of four or five workmen waiting for orders, and I must step into his carriage and go with him to look at the dining-room floor. It is an old house in which a new finish of hard wood is to replace the old painted work, and the question is whether to remove the old floor, which is of pine, wide boards, somewhat shrunken and uneven.

I might as well have given directions and finished my dinner as a Christian gentleman has a right to do: Take up the pine floor, straighten and repair the lining, if there is one,—if not, lay one,—put in extra supports if the joists are too far apart, lay a solid hard-wood floor of parquetry, and throw carpets to the dogs. I gave Mr. Jackson this advice before we had gone forty rods, but he was full of misgivings. He feared madam would n't like it, feared the expense, feared it would be cold, feared it would n't wear

well. Yet he is a good man and a brave, not given to weak and womanish fears, — but a “bare” floor! No, I must go and look at it.

Now, on this subject of hard-wood floors my head is perfectly level, my heart is fixed, my conscience clear. Like Susan Nipper, I say to some and all, that I may not be a flat-head Indian, and would not so become, but if I had got to take my choice between living all my life on a Turkey carpet or on the bare ground-floor of a barbarian wigwam, I should take the bare ground of the wigwam. Of course civilized heathens don't agree with me, and cling to their flesh-pots as if the salvation of their nerves, their comfort, their social standing, and their moral character depended upon the thickness of the wool carpets under their feet, and their capacity for absorbing and retaining dirt. I think it is actually true, as I told John the other day, that a carpeted room would be cleaner and the people who live in it



OAK AND WALNUT, STRIPED CENTRE.

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would be longer in consuming their allotted peck of dirt, if the carpet was never swept from the time it was put down till it was taken up, even if the children should occasionally drop their bread-and-butter, butter side down, step on fragments of gingerbread and wax-dolls, and forget to pick up the bits of paper and other litter that is evolved spontaneously where men and children are. I only wish the enlightened savages who believe in wool carpets the year round were required to put them down and take them up every year, and hold the inquest on the remains.

I made some such observation to Mrs. Jackson, and, I fear, shocked her greatly by my vehemence. She did n't like to be called a barbarian, and could n't give up her carpet. So we finally compromised the matter by deciding on a smooth hard floor for the centre of the room, with a parquet border about two and a half feet

wide, next the walls, a simple pattern of two colors. The carpet will be a large rug that can be taken up every day. The entire floor will be waxed, and kept clean and bright.

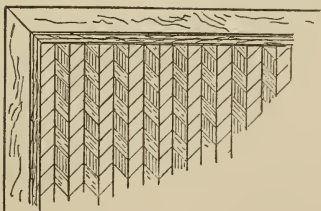
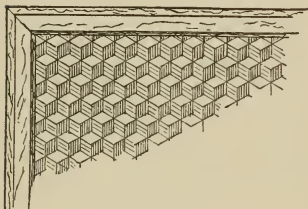
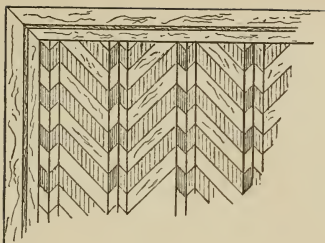
While we were discussing the matter, Lady Jane came in and began to observe in her most languishing manner that, of course, 't was a matter of taste, — for her part — I did n't wait to hear what "her part" might, could, would, or should be. I know it is not a matter of taste merely, but of common-sense and of eternal fitness. Without again referring to the disregard of cleanliness, what can be more incongruous from an artistic point of view than walls of hard wood and plaster, solid wainscot of oak or maple, pilasters and columns, heavy furniture, piano, book-case, and table, marble mantel, busts and bronzes, all resting or appearing to rest on a soft cushion of spun and woven wool? Gentlemen may cry peace, but there will be no peace till

some of the first principles of common-sense are observed in our interior finishings.

Every one of Mr. Jackson's fears is wholly groundless, except, of course, the first. A properly laid parquet floor will outwear five hundred carpets. Its first cost above what is indispensable for any floor will not be more than that of one good Brussels carpet ; it is not cold, — if the house is warm it won't feel so, except to those who go barefoot, and it makes no noise at all ! Rude, clumsy people in hobnailed shoes will raise a tumult anywhere, either with their feet or with their tongues, but no one could imagine the gods holding their dignified councils in salons carpeted with velvet tapestry. Neither do they tramp and stamp and slam doors. Doubtless there are people who ought to have all their salient angles protected with rubber cushions to save from damage and destruction everything with which they may come in contact. Careful and

well-bred occupants of civilized dwellings do not find it necessary to cushion the floors, or put pantalets on the piano.

Mr. Jackson doubts the cost. Fortunately I can send him to at least one shop in the State where solid parquet floors of hard woods, seven eighths of an inch thick, every piece tongued and grooved, perfectly "sound, seasoned, and smooth," can be furnished in various patterns for one shilling per square foot. There may be others where the same thing can be had for less. I can show him floors that have been in use for years treated occasionally to a coat of benzine and wax, applied with a large brush, and now as smooth, clean, and glossy as any floor ought to be. Of course a hard-pine floor laid in stripes three or four inches wide, the alternate boards stained with turpentine and asphaltum, will be much cheaper than this, and, after deducting the cost of the cheapest floor that can be laid, there



PRACTICAL JOKES.

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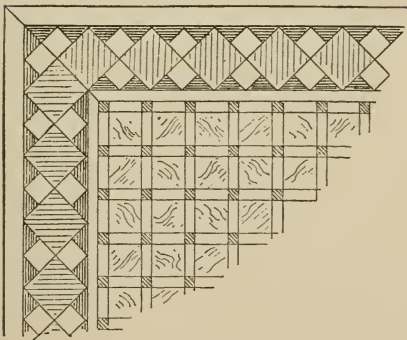
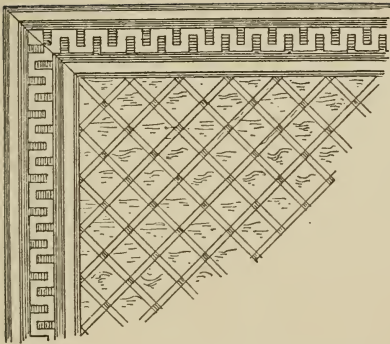
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

is n't much left for carpet. Mrs. Jackson's large rug will allow the centre of the floor to be laid in this plain fashion, and if the stripes happen to show around the edges there will be no harm done.

There is another attribute of these parquet floors which proves them to be in grand accord with the eternal verities; the most simple and natural patterns are also the most beautiful. I can't imagine who first promulgated the insane idea that a wood floor must look as much as possible like tile, a tile floor as much as possible like oil-cloth, and oil-cloth as much as possible like a Merrimack print. Beyond all question those designs for parquetry that are most consistent with the natural grain of the wood and facility of working it are pleasantest to look upon, to walk upon, to prepare, to lay and to pay for. As facetious persons sometimes hang a curved mirror where a plain one is expected, so a pattern

composed of wooden triangles and trapeziums may be laid, that, by trick of form and color, will make the floor appear like a lot of little cubes set cornerwise, a succession of troughs or miniature mountain-ranges. Such ought to be looked upon as practical jokes, not sober realities. We have a right to demand that a floor shall be level and smooth. It would be folly to make it actually rough and uneven ; it is foolish to try to cause or even to allow it to appear so. But then there are multitudes of people who court admiration by striving to appear what they are not and know they ought not to be.

Mr. Jackson will use Georgia pine and black-walnut for the border, pine alone for the centre. Walnut is not always hard enough for floors, and in much quantity is too dark for my fancy, but tastes differ. Red and white oak are good, but must be well oiled and waxed. Even then oak seems to be incurably afflicted with chronic



TWO KINDS OF OAK.

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rheumatism, joints troublesome in damp weather. Cherry and maple are good, so is black birch, — the heart and sap of the birch, one dark and the other light, making a good contrast of color. These last-named, however, though smooth and hard, lack the life of the pine, oak, and ash, which have a more conspicuous grain, and either one of which alone makes a handsome floor, the design being sufficiently marked by the natural fibre, without other variety of color.

Plain strips surrounding the border next the walls form a suitable finish, and have the important merit of being easily fitted to any irregularities in the outline of the room. Mrs. Jackson was in a quandary as to whether the border should follow the outline of the hearth or stop against it. The grate being at the side of a room already narrow a diminished border will encircle the hearth, the rug will be rectangular, leaving the small quadrangles at the sides of the chimney uncovered.

On my return I found, instead of the lost des-
sert, this letter from Harry, Junior : —

MY DEAR ARCHITECT, — We are in great distress
on account of the blinds. How upon earth can they
be hung upon the triple window of the dining-room,
on the wide window of the south chamber, and on the
bay window, so as to be opened? Mother says the
blind *must* be opened, or we shall die of the dampness
and the dumps. I can't afford inside shutters. Mrs.
Harry won't give up the triple window, and there'll
be the Old Harry to pay if you don't help us out of it.

Yours,

HARRY, JUN.

This is among the delights of the profession ;
importuned to accomplish impossibilities, and
reviled as pretenders if we plead inability.
Three pints, good measure, pressed down, shaken
together and running over, must be poured into
the bosom of a quart cup, — wine measure at
that. And this is the form of consolation we

get : "I've been told, sir, that you are a man of genius. If you are, you can make windows as wide as a barn-door, and fit them with blinds that will open and close like the wings of a butterfly. You can build stairs wide enough and easy enough for a cart and oxen to traverse in the space occupied by a ninety-nine-cent step-ladder. You can make windows and doors ten feet high in rooms that are but nine and a half. You can build huge fireplaces in the thickness of a four-inch partition, place doors and windows on all four sides of a fifteen-foot room, and still have large wall-space for piano and pictures. You can make dark rooms light, shady rooms sunny, low rooms high, small rooms large, and you can make five thousand dollars pay for what is worth ten thousand dollars. If you say you cannot accomplish all these things, I must find some one who can."

I shall answer Harry's letter about blinds in the morning.



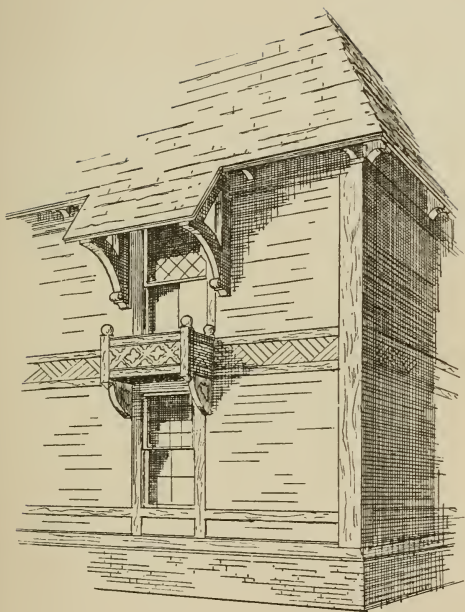
THE THIRD DAY.

BLINDS. — WOOD *vs.* PAINT.

....., May 16, 1877.



DEAR HARRY, JUN., — I wish your blinds would contrive to lead themselves or be led into somebody's ditch and stay there. They are a great nuisance, frail, shaking, quivering things, never staying open or shut as they ought, standing stupidly in the way of progress, and by sheer obstinacy preventing any change from the humdrum and commonplace. Your chamber needs the great square southern window; with that it is a dignified and charming room; but the blinds prefer two small ones with a pier between for themselves — the lazy things — to rest upon when they are open. The dining-room has only the eastern light. The wide



WHAT THE BLINDS PREVENT.

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opening formed by the group of three is indispensable to the best interior effect ; but the beauty of the room must be sacrificed in order to hang the outside blinds. I wish they were all hanged higher than Haman ! There should be a hood resting upon brackets over the southern library window, and a small balcony for flowers in front of the window in the chamber above. But no ! — the blinds would n't open.

Please to understand and remember this supreme decision : outside blinds have no rights that white folks are bound to respect. They are simply screens to keep out sunlight. They may be nailed up, screwed up, tied up with strings, hinged at the top or bottom, sides or centre, cut in two, doubled up, chasséed down the middle, shoved to the right or left on rings or rollers, — anything to accommodate the windows. My advice is to put them only where the summer sun is most intrusive, and, if it happens that these will not open conveniently, let them lie in the attic, except during the hot weather when you do

not care to open them fully. If, for the sake of seclusion, you must have shutters for all the windows, hang them inside and provide with boxings into which they will fold when open. I forgot, — you cannot afford inside shutters with boxings. Well, don't hang them without, — they would make the room look like a cheap school-house or a restaurant. Venetian blinds are pretty and accommodating. They will slide up out of sight or down over the entire window ; the slats will roll and remain at any desired angle, and they never quarrel with the curtains. If you cannot afford these, make a shade of some heavy draping cloth that will exclude the light, let it be suspended from a large rod at the top, and contrived to roll up by pulling a cord or to slide upon large rings. These shades should fit the window and hang straight and flat or nearly so. The material may be cheap and coarse ; it may be left quite unadorned, or decorated with simple horizontal bands of various widths, or other designs in appliqué or embroidery. Coarse jute-cloth, costing thirty or forty cents per square yard, answers very

nicely. The rich browns are most available colors, and the mere raveling of the edges makes an appropriate fringe, which may be knotted or left straight. Even common burlaps, with a small outlay of money and a large outlay of ingenuity, may be made very charming in effect. After these there is no end of cretonnes, crashes, and other fabrics among which you can choose when the time comes, and you may be happily inspired to use something that has never before been devoted to this purpose. Just now you only need to be assured that, by omitting to provide for a full set of regular outside blinds, you are in no danger of falling into a pit from which there can be no escape.

Yours, etc.,

— —.

That will perhaps set him to thinking, and if worst comes to worst, even the five-foot window will not be wholly unmanageable.

Just before dinner Mollie came in to ask what can be done with the wood-work of her room.

In contrast with the old paper the paint looked bright and fresh, but the moment the new was pinned upon the wall to try the effect, the doleful truth burst upon them that the ceiling must be distempered and the wood repainted.

“This discovery threw me into a most dis-



WAITING FOR ORDERS.

ressing state of mind. My unfortunate room seems likely to destroy the peace of the entire household. The painters say it will take two coats to cover the old paint, and the carpet can't be put down till it is all dry. There are three men and nineteen cans of paint waiting for me

to choose a color. Now which hue of the rainbow shall it be ? ”

“ How much wood-work is there in the room except the floor and the doors ? ”

“ Not any, nothing but a band around next the floor and the pieces that go up beside the doors and windows. ”

“ Is any of this ornamental ? ”

“ Ornamental ! No, indeed. It’s as ugly as possible, but it’s useful, I suppose. Can’t it be covered up in some way ? ”

“ Is it entirely plain ? ”

“ Almost, not quite ; there’s a sort of band, rounded, I think, at the edges. But how can you cover it ? ”

“ By applying colors that will prevent it from being the most conspicuous thing in the room. It should n’t be entirely covered, only debarred from occupying the prominent position to which positive beauty is alone entitled. Give it a color

similar to the ground of the paper, but a little darker, and make the 'rounded' part a shade or two darker still. Paint the doors the same, all but the panels, which should match the ground of the furniture and be decorated by yourself."

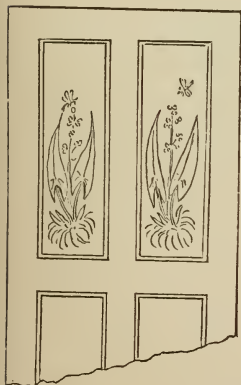
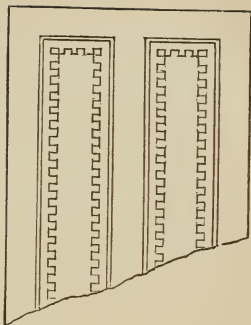
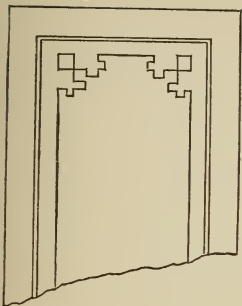
"Decorated by myself!"

"Yes, ma'am, decorated by yourself. A door is just as much a piece of furniture as a wardrobe or a wash-stand, and should be treated accordingly."

"But if the panels are to be decorated, they should have beautiful paintings in oil, which none but an artist can execute."

"Not at all. A plain stripe, a fret or an ivy vine in outline or flat color, an arabesque of your own design. Pray why did you study drawing? Is your talent to be hidden in the napkin of your own portfolio?"

"Alas! I'm 'a boy without a genius.' I could n't originate a design to save my room from destruction."



PAINTED PANELS.

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“There is no absolute need of originality. There are plenty of graceful and appropriate designs that you can adopt. Go to the woods and hills, pick up a spray of wild-blackberry vine, a cinquefoil, or a fern leaf, and copy its form in any color you like. If your free-hand practice won't enable you to copy these to your satisfaction, darken the room, or take advantage of a rainy evening when there's no danger of callers, suspend the object selected within a pencil's length of the door, set a bright light at the opposite side of the room, and trace the outline of the shadow in the place desired. The convolutions, veining, and overlapping can be filled in afterwards. Tracing shadows is n't strictly artistic study, but gives an admirable foundation for it, and saves time,—a great point in this fast-moving age.”

“O dear! what a work it is to finish one little chamber! I don't believe the founding of the Roman nation was anything like it.”

“Probably not, but I have yet to learn of anything worth possessing that does not cost the owner much time, labor, thought, — yes, pain and peril. In fact, no one can justly claim ownership except upon these terms.”

“Ah me! what a dreadful world it is, to be sure! — and the painters are waiting.”

I forgot to tell her that the ceiling must not be white, but a subdued gray or an invisible blue. She will probably make the discovery herself.

It is certainly a mistake to try to render simple casings and band mouldings ornamental by applying bright or striking colors. A slight change of shade or the blending of two low tones will prevent the tameness of a uniform neutral tint, and not result in giving prominence to constructive features that ought to remain in the background.

By a happy coincidence, later in the day while

the subject was still fresh in mind, St. Augustine came in to discuss the matter of finishing his chambers. I'm pleased to observe that a wholesome disgust of graining is becoming almost universal. It takes a bold, bad man to calmly assert a preference for streaked brown paint in futile imitation of oak or walnut instead of the genuine wood, the claim that it is cheaper and more easily kept clean being proven false. It also requires some boldness to assert an honest preference for paint rather than the natural surface and color of pine, ash, or any of the more common woods. "Finished in hard wood throughout" is the crowning boast of the modern "villa." Paint smells of turpentine and heresy. St. Augustine is bold, but not bad, and the soul of candor and courtesy. Even to differ from him is better than to agree with most men.


"The truth is," said he, "I'm afraid of too

much wood. I know that painted work is in a certain sense disguised. I know that many woods are beautiful in grain, tint, and shading ; but suppose, in some cases, I want a color to prevail in the furnishing and on the walls of a room which will neither harmonize nor contrast with any available wood. What then ? ”

“ Paint, by all means.”

“ Do you really mean so ? I thought you despised paint.”

“ Far from it. There is a solid comfort in the permanence and genuineness of unconcealed ash, oak, walnut, or pine that paint is powerless to give, and there are certain apartments and offices in a dwelling in which the essential finish rightfully dictates terms of peace and harmony to the carpet, the curtains, the upholstery, and the walls. But when the furniture and the other movable and variable accessories hold absolute sway, then every part of the structure should

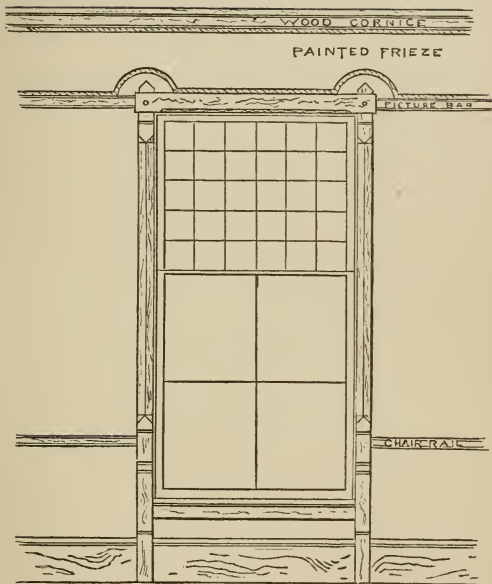
surrender unconditionally to paint, polish, or gilding, as the case may be. There is, in truth, a great variety of woods from which we may choose ; but to obtain from them  ings and combinations of color is difficult to say impossible."

"Now this is most delightful to me. I have lain awake nights trying to decide among a whole cabinet of specimens, and have pictures before my mind's eye the chambers in walnut, in oak, in ash, maple, cherry, and pine, and I'm oppressed with a sense of 'wooden-ness.' If I may be allowed to paint them in delicate tints, my trouble on that point is over."

"I need not remind you that this painting must be artistically done. You cannot use red, white, and blue, however delicately laid on, nor other striking, obtrusive, and inharmonious colors. These will give an impression of 'paintiness' instead of 'wooden-ness.'"

“O no! And that reminds me of another trouble. Is it necessary to have so much wood? Must the casings be so very wide and prominent but suppose, windows will all have curtains, the prevail in the *portières* or screens of some sort. room which from a non-professional standpoint, any with an extent or elaboration of this wood-work “Per quite unnecessary. I wish it might be wholly abolished.”

“The non-professional standpoint often commands a wider and clearer view than can be obtained in a foggy professional atmosphere. There is no sense in a mathematical limitation for the width of these casings or base-boards, and, though a substantial protection is required where they are found, it is most unreasonable to treat them as ornamental in a room whose legitimate decoration has no affinity with huge beams, posts, and pilasters of wood, either bare or painted. So you may cast off your burdens,



NOT ACCORDING TO RULE.

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sleep the sleep of the just, make the architrave as light as you please, and paint them according to your own sweet will."

"I shall be only too happy to paint them just as you direct, but I could not be content in the thought that everything in and about the room must pass under the yoke of conformity to the unyielding demands of unpainted wood."

To one less fastidious, or in a house of fewer rooms, a judicious selection from the "cabinet of specimens" ought to furnish a sufficient variety. The heavier, coarse-grained woods do, unquestionably, give a sense of "wooden-ness" and nonconformity that is sometimes oppressive, but white maple, white pine, holly, poplar, for light effects, black birch, cherry, mahogany for darker, have each a fine grain and readily assimilating hues. If well managed, the sacrifices made to their individuality do not appear, however great they may be in fact.

More and more forcibly the fact is borne in upon my mind that the ability to combine is a rare one. Beauty is such a wayward element, so appealing, so selfish, and, withal, so jealous. Even among those who are fully sensible that a color, a design in paper, paint, or fabric, that is intrinsically lovely, may become hideous if not harmoniously placed, few can resist the temptation to adopt a beautiful thing because it *is* beautiful, without considering the weightier matter of fitness.

I often think of the ingenious painter who, finding no perfect model of the human face, but, as he supposed, perfect features scattered about and misplaced, conceived the sublime idea of composing a face by borrowing the heavenly eyes of one, the bewitching nose of another, the rapturous mouth of a third, and so on, concealing the features as soon as they were painted until the whole countenance should be

complete. When at last this eclectic production was unveiled, the revelation was so horrible that the poor painter fainted at the woful sight.

I like to show my box of samples of wood to enthusiastic lovers of such things, listen to their exclamations of delight, and hear them long to have a whole house finished with something that would throw them into convulsions if their wishes could be gratified.





THE FOURTH DAY.

WALL-PAINTING AND PAPER-HANGINGS.

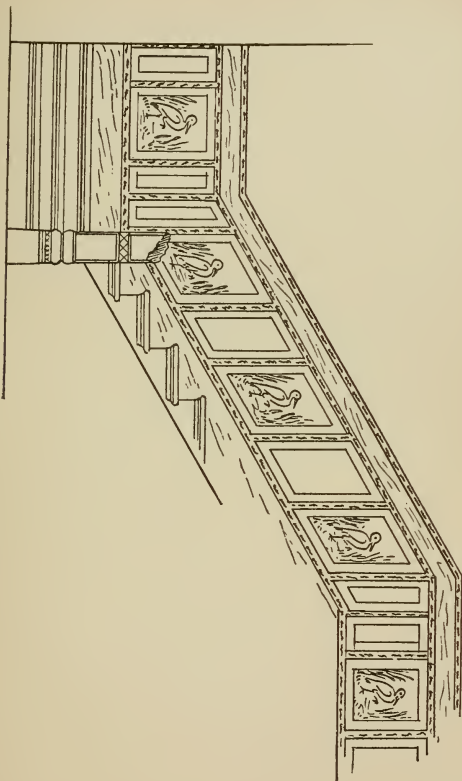
THIS has been one of the "red letter" days. Business called me to Mecca, and I improved the opportunity to replenish my stock of ideas by waiting upon the prophet. Since we are not all possessed of positive genius, it would be a happy thing if the uninspired were wise enough to follow the brilliant lights that are steadily burning in various places. There is one such illuminating shrine in Worcester. When all other arguments and illustrations fail to convince an obtuse client that simplicity, honesty, good taste, economy, and originality are still possible in this effete

and sinful world, I send him on a pilgrimage to that city. The prophet suffers from these visitations, but I am persuaded that the world will be the better for them, and unhesitatingly sacrifice my friend on the altar of domestic art.

I found the prophet hard at work, a sure sign, by the way, that he is genuine, and not one of the false kind of whom we are promised so many in these latter days. Some people have a notion that the mission of prophets is to preach and prophesy, tell what ought to be, and what, if nothing else happens, possibly will be, but never to put their own shoulders to the wheel; all of which is a mistake. The true prophet is not only without honor among his kindred,—he does not even suspect himself of inspiration. He is too busy with works to be talking about his faith. He wears an old blouse and an awfully dirty pair of pantaloons, and shows how things ought to be done by doing them himself.

At least, that is the state in which I found my prophet to-day, and my time was devoted to a study of his work, having in mind certain ambitious young women who possess more time and talents than they can profitably employ, and which is, therefore, given up to croquet, flirtation, flounces, and other satanic devices whereby the rising generation are being led to perdition.

My first inspection was of the staircase hall. The entire walls of this, which are of ordinary plastering, have been painted a pale, rather a peculiar shade of blue, with common oil paint. At the time of my arrival the prophet was decorating the wall opposite the balustrade, and to about the same height, with a succession of impanelled pictures following the ascent of the stairs. The panels have a black field with a border of buff, and upon each one is depicted in monochrome a blue stork standing on one leg,



ASPIRING STORKS.

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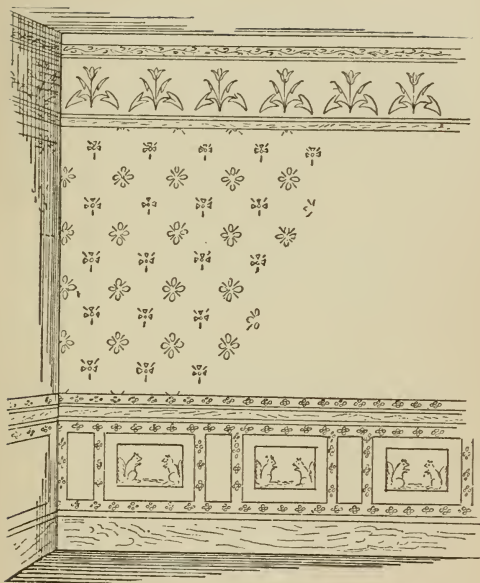
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

— as becomes a careful fowl who is afraid of wetting his feet — among buff reeds. Above the wood capping at the top of the painted panels is a stencilled border of buff and blue, and the spaces between the stork pictures have the same blue ground, bestrewn with stencilled geometric figures. At the top of the room is a buff frieze with blue figures showing through. The wall-screen is quite covered over with a vine pattern conventionalized after Eastlake; that is to say, it is a graceful, leafy vine, but composed wholly of rectangles and right-angled triangles. This is also in monochrome, a darker shade of blue than the wall surface.

All this, and much more, the prophet has done with his own hands. Of course it has taken time, patience, and genius, — I forgot, genius *is* patience, — but being done it is as permanent as an old master, which, I have no doubt, it will one day be reckoned. The prophet, as it appears,

does not approve of calcimine, distemper, or water colors, for the excellent reason that the cost of material for either water or oil colors is a small matter compared with the labor involved. The latter once applied will remain as long as any reasonable mortal would wish to abide in an earthly dwelling, while the former is easily disfigured, and, if defaced, restored with difficulty.

In the dining-room the wall-screen is a sort of buff brown with a dark red figure stencilled upon it. The dado, a dark red, with panels of very bright, very prim, very stiff, and jolly-looking red squirrels in *vis-à-vis* pairs, with roseate borders in the same colors marking the panels. Egyptian lilies in red and umber shading, with an occasional dash of white, and in the most dignified and Pharaonic attitudes, form the frieze, which is perhaps eighteen inches or two feet wide. When I asked the prophet if this wide frieze did not make the room look low, solemnly



STENCILS.

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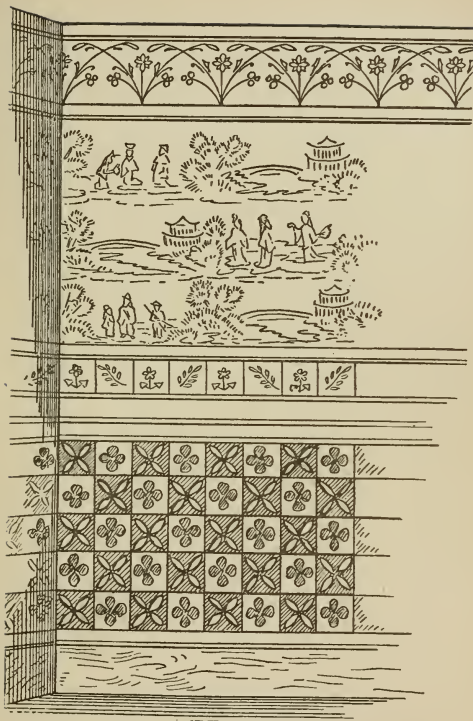
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he answered: " ' An high look and a proud heart and the ploughing of the wicked is sin.' If I were going to build a cathedral, a state-house dome, or any other grand affair by whose proportions I wished to produce an overpowering effect, I should build as high as I could reach, in fact, and double the height in appearance if possible. When a room of five or six yards square is high enough for comfort and convenience, who, that hath a good understanding, an upright soul, and a chastened spirit, would care whether it appeared to be high or low?" I was much impressed by the text and by the prophet's discourse. The question which I asked him has been hurled at me in one form or another, sometimes as an inquiry, oftener as an assertion, about five thousand times, and they who ask seem to rest in an immovable faith that the first duty of a human apartment is to look as "high" as possible. They would pay tithe of

mint, anise, and cummin, disregarding the weightier matters of harmonious proportion and thoughtful adaptation to legitimate use.

The billiard-room I noticed (the prophet plays an excellent game), because both paper and paint are used on the walls. The dado, an innocent pattern in large checks, six or eight inches square, alternate red and brown, each having a simple figure of the opposite color, is painted on a plastered wall. Above this there is a screen of the most astounding Chinese paper, displaying all the colors of the rainbow and all the forms of the antipodes. Still above this a wide but serene frieze, also of paper.

In other rooms I found other combinations of paper and paint, the paint being, most appropriately, near the floor, where it is exposed to the soiling influences so damaging to paper. Of course, paint on plastered walls is by no means invulnerable, being especially liable to fatal as-



WOOD, PAPER, AND PAINT.

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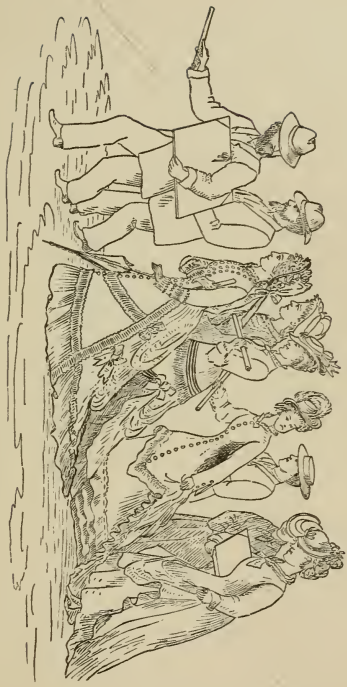
sault from the sharp corners of chair-backs. Hence the imperative need of a band of wood at the right height to receive the brunt of these attacks. Of course, too, a wainscot of wood is often desirable, but, as before mentioned, my interest to-day has been in behalf of a certain class of work and a certain class of workers.

If I were not weakly and wickedly cumbered with much serving, I would at once make a pious missionary of myself, and use all the eloquence at my command to induce a company of pilgrims to put peas in their shoes and start on foot for Worcester, then and there to learn how it is possible to make a house homelike, interesting, beautiful, by the thought of one brain and the labor of one pair of hands. (I ought, in justice, to say two brains and two pairs of hands that think and act as one.) I do not say that the work of the prophet is perfect, that the style he has adopted, the colors he has combined, the forms he has

chosen, are the best possible ; in order to say that I must know more than any one ever did, or ever can know. But one thing is certain : this home, this temple,—if a more sacred temple than a perfect home can be found, I should like to see it,—has this rare power ; its glory is contagious, it communicates satisfaction and delight, it kills envy. Better than all else,—and here comes the demonstration of true prophecy,—it stirs a consciousness of inspiration, it arouses not only the desire, but a sense of power to go and do likewise.

My flock of pilgrims will doubtless protest that they cannot draw and paint and choose colors, like the prophet, even if they had the time,—and, very likely, most of them cannot ; but it does not require half as much training of mind or muscle to paint a piece of wood or plastering in a plain color as it does to make tatting. It is as easy to choose colors for a dado and a frieze as for

ON THE WAY TO WORCESTER.



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a belt or neck-ribbon. The patterns that are most satisfactory are usually the most simple and most simply arranged, while as for the necessary time — my patience ! to think how long it takes to put one row of trimming, say “ box plaiting ” (that is the only kind of dress-trimming I know by name), on a long trailed dress, and then to think how long it lasts before it is ripped off and something else put on ! But this wall-trimming will last for generations, and it is art, too, not fashion.

It is strange how few have learned the solid satisfaction of working *toward* an ideal, in doing a little at a time, but doing that little so well that it is a constant joy, adding, as the time comes for it, one feature after another, steadily advancing toward a goal that may never be reached, but by a route so charming that the end is quite forgotten.

By way of practical, matter-of-fact illustration,

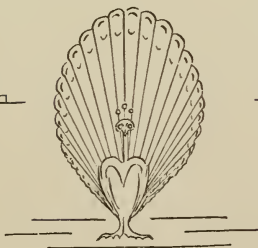
take any family sitting-room having the usual plain casings and a bare plastered wall. In the first place the band of wood to protect the plastering from the sharp elbows of the furniture must be put around the room. This may be like the rest of the wood-work. It may be painted black, or of unpainted hard wood; it may be absolutely plain and flat; it may have bevelled or rounded edges; it may have simple grooves in the face of it, or incised figures to be brought out with bright colors. Whatever it is, any carpenter's shop will furnish it for a few cents a foot, and an ordinary workman can put it up in a few hours. This with the baseboards at the bottom and the door and window casings, against which it stops, forms the frame of the dado. If vertical bars are inserted subdividing the long spaces into short panels, the labor is somewhat increased. The next thing is to paint the plastering underneath the chair-

rail the chosen color, which may be borrowed from the latest fashions in dress-goods, from out-door hues of earth and sky, or taken from a sample card of colors or Owen Jones's Grammar of Ornament. If the first coat is not satisfactory in shades, the second — for two will be needed — can be changed.

Even if the work thus far absorbs all the spare time and funds of a whole year, it will be well worth doing. The next spring get at a bookstore some oiled paper, such as artists use for sketching, select a pretty pattern for a border, — or design one, — trace it on the paper, cut it out, and stencil it above the base and below the chair-rail. A darker shade of the first color will always be *safe* for this, a contrasting color may be more effective. Divide the dado into panels with the same, if there are no vertical bars of wood ; if there are, carry it up each side of them. This will occupy another year, maybe, and mean-

while the room and its occupants are growing in grace together. On another sheet of the oiled paper, or the same one if it is big enough, let the prettiest design possible be drawn, — it may not be very pretty, but the prettiest possible. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. One who is especially rich in fancy may have a different picture upon each panel, but it is not necessary, and the more formal they are the better they will “wear.” Let the dogs have square toes and block heads; let the curves of the owls’ wings and the peacocks’ tails be angular, and the leaves of the lilies be drawn by square and compass. Abjure all attempts at shading and perspective effect. This makes another year.

A wood moulding at the bottom of the frieze will be the next detail, and during the selection and application of the paper above this, another annual revolution will be accomplished, after



SQUARE TOES.

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which nothing remains but to hang upon the rest of the wall surface some one of the beautiful paper-hangings, which, thanks to the Kensington Art Museum, are now within the reach of everybody, designs really and truly artistic in color and pattern. I discovered one day in rummaging for papers what was new to me, but, possibly, familiar to others,—that paper-hangings are made in plain oil tints which the dealers solemnly swear are as impervious to injury as actual paint, that they can be daubed with boot-blackening, streaked with bread-and-butter fingers, subjected in fact to any indignity in the way of dirt, and still, by a judicious use of hot soap-suds, be brought out as bright and smiling as a freshly washed school-boy. I cannot, in honor, doubt the statement, and, if it *is* true, see no reason why such paper may not be used as a background for painted decoration, and have some advantages over the painted plastering, especially for those

17952

to whom painting with a big brush seems a large undertaking.

Of course energetic souls will say months, weeks, days, instead of years, but there are many homes that would rejoice at such results even after the longest period. It is sheer folly for people who do not work more than twelve hours a day, who smoke as much as once a week, who are able to buy more than two calico dresses or one new bonnet in a year, who can write their own names, and send their children to the public school till they are twelve years old, to pretend that they have not the time, ability, or means to gratify a taste for such home decoration as I have suggested, and which has led me quite away from my description of the temple and its prophet; a description whose continuation must be deferred to a more convenient season, for I am, in truth, grievously cumbered as aforesaid.



FIFTH DAY.

DOORS AND SCREENS.

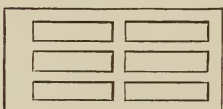
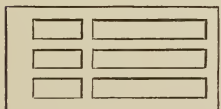
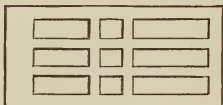
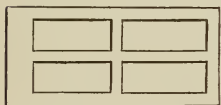
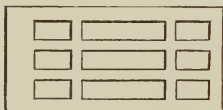
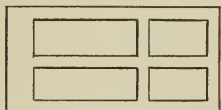
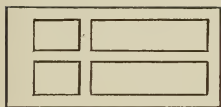
DEAR SIR, — Please send plans for doors, and give me something, if you can, besides the old, old pattern that must have been in use ever since straight lines and square corners were invented. I don't care what they are if they are only doors.

Yours,

“WARWICK.”

As usual, Warwick hits the nail on the head. If I should ever be sat upon by coroners, I think the verdict will be “died of doors.” They are my *bête noir*. They worry me beyond measure. The square, stiff, selfish, inhospitable, uncompromising things! Harsh in character and ugly in

design. They always suggest the telegraphic alphabet, — a long panel and a short one, one short and two long, two shorts and one long, three shorts, a short between two longs, a long between two shorts, and so forth, *ad infinitum*. Then they are so heavy and obtrusive, if wide enough to allow two well-dressed persons to pass through abreast, which they seldom are. Why, when I was married, the whole bridal party were compelled to enter the parlor in single file, like an army of vanquished barbarians passing under a Roman yoke. Of course no such comparison entered my unsophisticated soul at that time, but I could not help stepping on the bridal veil, — unless I had waited for the next train, — and nobody knows what disaster might follow such a blunder committed under circumstances less critical and absorbing. To be sure, that was in the days of expansive skirts, a fashion liable to return at any moment.



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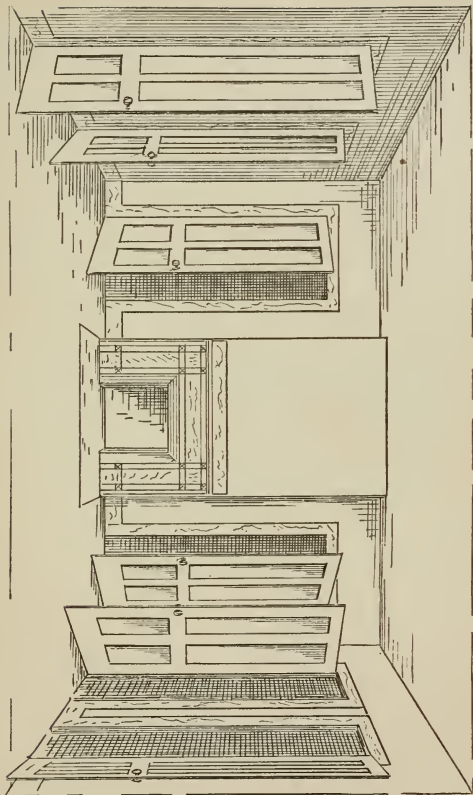
To be more explicit, a swinging door, three or three and a half feet wide, monopolizes thirty or forty square feet of wall space, and from fifteen to twenty square feet of floor room. If it is four, five, or six feet wide, as it often ought to be, how much is there left on the side of a sixteen-foot room for furniture or pictures? If there happen to be two or three such doors,—I've seen small rooms with half a dozen,—“kept in-doors” describes the condition of the inmates most accurately. To speak mathematically, five three-foot doors opening into a room fifteen feet square, cover, absorb, sequester, and totally demoralize just thirty-three per cent of the whole apartment.

Thirdly, they are so intensely “wooden.” In an elegant drawing-room where fine rich draperies, delicate ornaments, and rare paintings abound, can anything be more grotesque than to see the owner complacently point at the huge proportions, the monstrous mouldings, and the

gold-plated trimmings of a pair of mahogany, or rosewood doors, as if these big barricades, with the long and short panels in rectangular triplets, were a sublime work of art hardly second to the bronze doors of the Capitol? As a matter of fact their sole claim to notice anywhere consists in their sound workmanship, their carefully polished surfaces, and the amount of wood they contain at twenty-five cents per square foot, — qualities that would indeed appear to great advantage in the shop where they were made, and give great satisfaction to the man who invented the machine that made them. As rivals to a fine landscape in oil, an engraving, or even a family portrait, these six panels of “French burl” are an impertinent intrusion; especially if the picture must hang behind the door or be left to moulder in the garret because there is no room for it below.

My advice to Warwick is, firstly, to bestow

WHERE SHALL THE PICTURES BE?

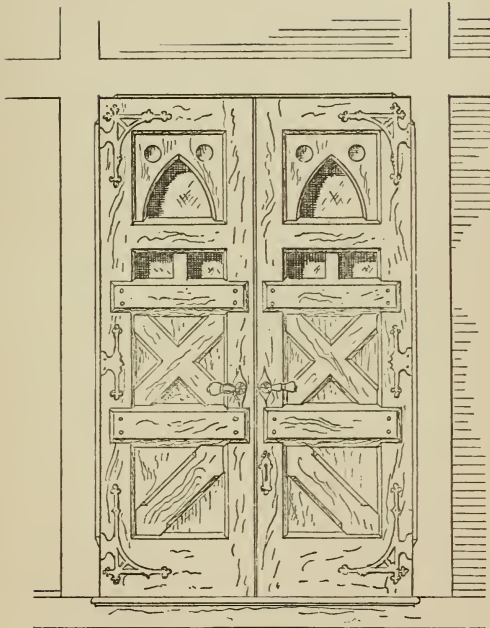


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some of his doors upon the missionary society, and substitute for his own use heavy curtains. These to be used for doors of communication between chambers *en suite*, for closets, or for other situations where the impassable barrier is not necessary. Secondly, to let those doors that are usually open slide into the walls, and for the sake of furnishing and for occasional use as a screen, provide hangings as charming and elegant as his taste and purse will allow. If the opening to be covered is not more than seven feet by nine, these will cost from four dollars upward, and if contrived to move sideways or rise and fall easily, I fancy the sliding doors will very rarely be drawn from their hiding-places. If they are tolerably heavy — if they are not they can easily be “padded” with coarse blankets — these curtains will be found as perfect a protection against changes of temperature as the heaviest door that ever grated on its hinges.

The outer doors will take care of themselves. They are properly intended as a strong defence against unwelcome intrusion from without. But for tornadoes, tramps, burglars, gossips, mad dogs, and other vicious beasts, our dwellings might be as free from doors as a Bedouin's tent. Since we must at least have outer doors, they should be made to appear what they are and to show their strength. There is, surely, no good reason for making the entrance door of a private house consist chiefly of plate glass, as though its chief end were to display as much as possible of the interior in the manner of a milliner's shop or a licensed beer-saloon. Yet a limited amount of glass, especially if in small lights, may emphasize the appearance of solidity. Neither does there seem to be good sense in setting a solid door within a border of glass; it makes it appear too small for the aperture. I acknowledge a sentimental fancy for a wide, low, single front-door,



A STRONG DEFENCE.

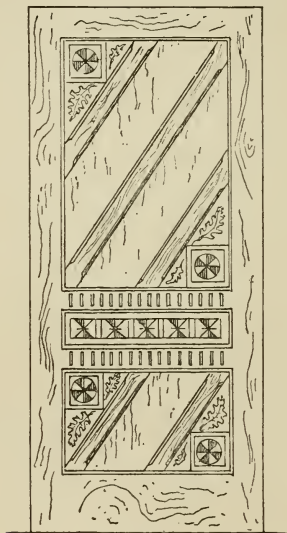
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cut in two horizontally, by which means the upper half may be opened while the lower remains closed, in the fashion of the good old times when it was necessary to keep the babies from creeping out and the dogs from coming in. Nowadays the babies, what few there are, are too well bred to creep on all-fours in the front hall, and, even if any one wished to open a part of the door, there must be a fly-screen on the spot, which spoils the pleasant effect of the hospitable opening. So I suppose this kind of double doors must be set down as a vain protest against the prosaic present by a bald imitation of the poetic but inconvenient past.

For the needful inner doors, the stout frames, technically speaking the "stiles," must be straight and rectangular, but instead of the telegraphic-alphabet panels, I have given Warwick a screen of narrow sheathing, matched and *bevelled*, not beaded, with irregular and somewhat decorated

bars crossing it in the direction of strength, and have made a small, plain panel, or shield, in one corner, to be decorated in bright colors.

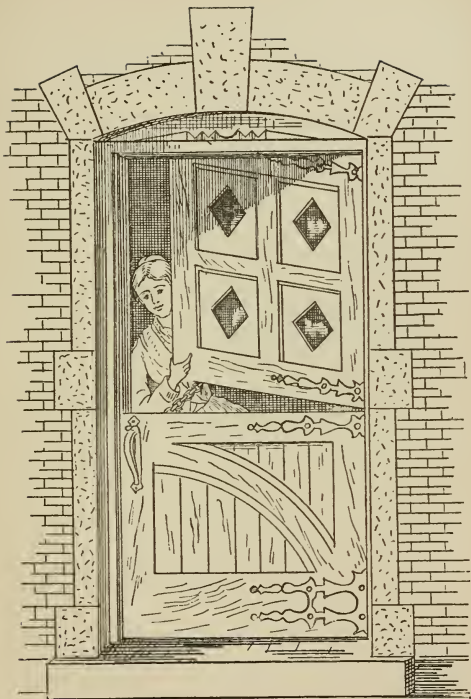


A DOOR.

The intense "woodenness" of the unpainted doors may be further mitigated by painting the bevels, the chamfers, grooves, or any notchings or incised work, with bright, honest colors.

Since the making of plain panelled doors

has been reduced to such a simple, mechanical

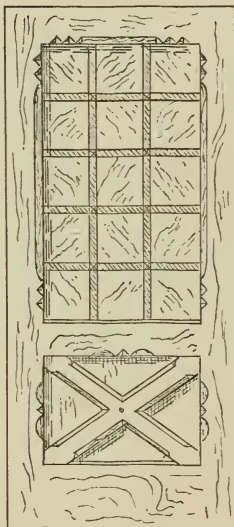


CAUTIOUS BUT NOT CONVENIENT.

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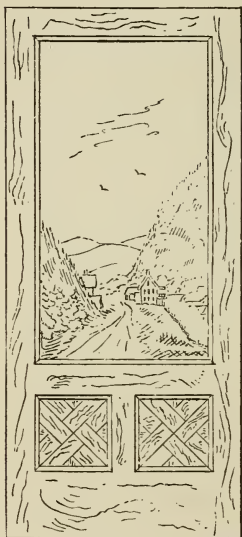
operation that a door one and a half inches thick, three feet by seven and a half feet, can be made of the best stock and in the most perfect manner for a dollar and a half, it cannot be reckoned an unreasonable extravagance to add a few dollars' worth of interest and variety to this necessarily conspicuous piece of furniture.



ANOTHER DOOR.

For furniture it *is*, and it never will receive justice until this fact is recognized. A pretty

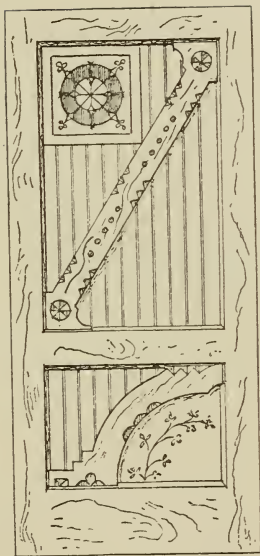
and effective treatment consists in making all



SCREEN ABOVE.

the upper part of the door within the stiles in one large panel of plain unfinished wood, the stiles being in such form that an independent frame covered with some fabric, either ornamental in itself or susceptible of decoration, can be set in, covering the bare wood. This movable screen can be taken out and

repaired or changed, if need be, and of course



ONE OF WARWICK'S.

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the opposite side of the door may be made as solid and stupidly conventional as the most punctilious could desire.

I wonder that screens, pure and simple, are not more often found among the furniture of our common rooms, both for ornament and use. A plain, rectangular frame made of any clear, hard-wood board three or four inches wide and one inch thick, furnished with feet to maintain its upright position, and either with or without casters, is all the wood-work required. For covering this a great variety of materials may be used: paper, common cotton cloth, brown linen, linen tracing-cloth (for transparencies), crashes, canvas, cretonnes, damasks, silks, satins, and velvet. Upon these may be pasted, painted, sketched, traced, stitched, embroidered, embossed, or otherwise applied, attached, and depicted in paper, ink, paint, in worsted or silk, in beads, bugles, or buttons, in threads of silver and gold,

works and devices that may be executed in an hour or occupy the leisure of a year. If the frame is made in two or three vertical parts, folding one upon the other, the understanding feet will not be necessary, and the whole affair can be more snugly banished whenever its room happens to be more valuable than its company.

These are a few of the many uses for which such screens may be employed: Keeping the midday sun from an exposed spot in a favorite carpet without excluding his beneficent beams from the room, protecting sensitive "neuralgists" from perilous drafts of air by day or night, shading from gas or sunlight weak and weary eyes, temporarily closing draped openings that have no doors and prefer to have none because there is no room for them to swing or slide, concealing a door that is not often used, but which cannot be permanently abolished, dividing a large room into two parts when it happens that two small



BROWN LINEN BACKGROUND.

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chambers will hold more people than one large one, or fencing in a corner of the hall for those emergencies that are constantly occurring in hospitable families. And what a paradise could be made in one corner of the sitting-room for the little folks! What warehouses and museums; what pavilions and palaces for playing at house-keeping and in other ways delightfully anticipating the trials and tribulations of grown-up life. Even if many days were consumed in fabricating them, two or three such delicate, movable partitions would prove an unlimited resource in the way of leisure time to any mother upon whom rests the sacred duty of caring for a family of children.

Saide has just finished a screen made from a breadth of an old brown linen duster, smoothly stretched upon a walnut frame. Its decoration consists of figures cut from bright-colored cretonnes, arranged in original and thoroughly artis-

tic designs, and simply stitched upon the linen. Of course its chief excellence lies in the skill and feeling with which these pretty patterns are selected and arranged. This being well done, the-whole affair is a most successful rival of the beautiful Oriental screens that are now so famous and familiar. Its practical office is to hide the refrigerator in the dining-room, but its beauty is its own excuse for being, and no one thinks of asking what is behind it.





SIXTH DAY.

CASINGS, CAPS, AND WINDOW SEATS.

“ Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I,
To mourn and murmur and repine,” —

as I did only last week, on account of the trials of my profession! It must have been the result of a dyspeptic attack, for when I am well-dressed and in my right mind my work is a delight to me, with only this cause for grief: the actual performance falls sadly below the ideal conception. The combined perplexities, the unexpected and unreasonable requirements, the meagre and doubtful pecuniary recompense, are mere passing shadows over the sunny delight of artistic creation. In this, as in all human affairs, no man

liveth unto himself. While it is, indeed, an irksome task to try to satisfy the Wandering Jew, this light affliction vanisheth before the exceeding satisfaction of striving in behalf of a fellow-man of cultured thought and the instincts of a gentleman. St. Augustine is one of these, the colonel is another. Without intentionally wandering from the path of impartial duty, the performance rises more nearly to the sublimity of the conception, for such — of whom is the kingdom of Heaven — than for the more grovelling and earthly-minded.

The Colonel came up to-day with the designs for his door and window casings, which are not quite satisfactory, through lack of originality. Now, there are persons who stand in mortal terror of anything original, seeming to consider it all in the family — first cousin at least — with original sin. Others delight in nothing else. It is a mistake, by the way, to suppose there is

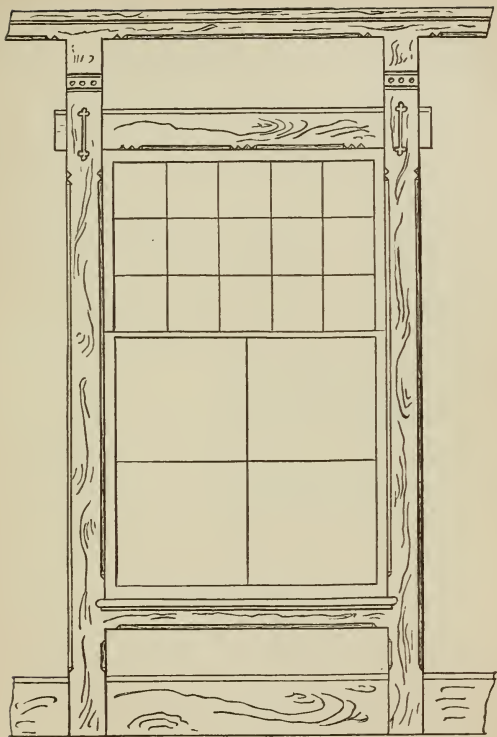
nothing new under the sun. On the contrary, notwithstanding our inherited apishness, an exact copy of anything is rarely seen; it's never found nowadays in "hand-work." The chief obstacles to newness of design in the products of the nineteenth century are the inventions, wickedly sought out, that make it possible to reproduce by the million fac-similes of every manufactured article on the face of the earth that happens to fill a popular want or strike the popular fancy.

The Colonel wishes to exclude "mill mouldings," that have been in use ever since moulding-machines were invented.

"There is no more propriety," said he, "in making all the door and window frames (he means casings) alike than there would be in selecting picture-frames of one unvarying style; no more reason for having half a dozen doors of the same pattern, than in hanging half a dozen

pictures of the Yosemite Valley. Each window discloses a picture, a magnificent one, and the views are not only unlike each other, but each has a changing beauty, new every morning and fresh every evening. We ought to learn something from Nature's infinite variety. A reasonable conformity in style is all right, a stupid uniformity all wrong."

It makes one feel like a second Herod to strangle a new-born hope of so much promise; but what could I do? It would not answer to give one door a square top, its right-hand brother a semicircle, its left-hand sister an ellipse, and its neighbor opposite a segment, just because a spruce-tree is pointed, an elm domed, and a pepperidge flat as a pancake; neither should a beaded casing join hands with one that is chamfered, or carving sit in close communion with plain or incised surfaces. The Colonel has Nature and logic on his side, but in the middle course is



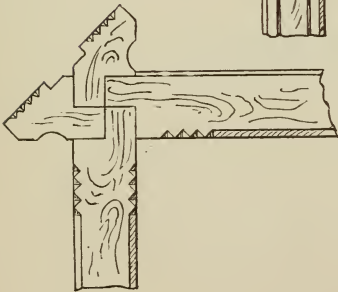
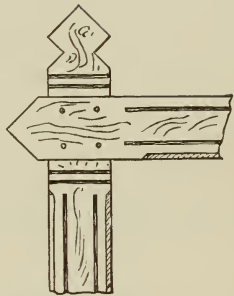
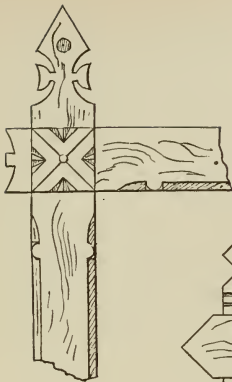
VISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT.

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safety. It is not quite fair to assign the same rank to the window-casings as to the picture-frames, though the former may seem to serve a similar purpose. They are a part of the essential structure, and have no claim to be considered decorative, but the picture-frames, although not themselves ornamental, supplement and complete the most distinguished decoration in the room. It is only requisite that the window-frames and other related work shall be consistent, honest in construction, and not obtrusive. There is good reason why the casings at the sides of the windows should start from the floor or from the base, even when they are entirely plain. They give visible means of support to the whole window, which otherwise has the appearance of being stuck upon the face of the plastering, — suspended midway between the floor and the ceiling. This forms a panel underneath, which may be of wood or plastered like the rest of the wall.

The Colonel asked whether these casings and those of the doors might not extend to the ceiling as well. To which there can be no objection, provided there is a belt of wood around the top of the room to receive them. This need not be an elaborate cornice ; a mere strip a few inches wide and no thicker than the casings themselves will suffice. Of course it is a legitimate subject for decoration, and being superior in position, should not be inferior in quality. From this the pictures may be suspended, or a subordinate band, ten, fifteen, or twenty inches below it may be put up to form a frieze and carry the knobs or hooks that sustain the pictures. This notion also found favor in the eyes of the Colonel, and instead of carrying all the casings to the top of the room, he decides to let them merely rise above this subordinate belt or architrave, having a decorated, quaint, or fantastic terminal, and crossing the belt in such a manner that cracks



FANTASTIC HEADS.

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will not be opened by the shrinking of the stock. This will be quite right provided the space between the two horizontal members is fully occupied and "brought out" with a positive color, or a conspicuous decoration of some sort. This is most important, otherwise there will seem to be a gap in the wall-finish, such as, to set forth great things by small, sometimes appears when a little boy's stockings are too short at the top and his pantaloons too short at the bottom.

This being settled, the Colonel introduced another topic.

"I want and must have," said he, "one thing more, for which you have no provision, namely, window-seats."

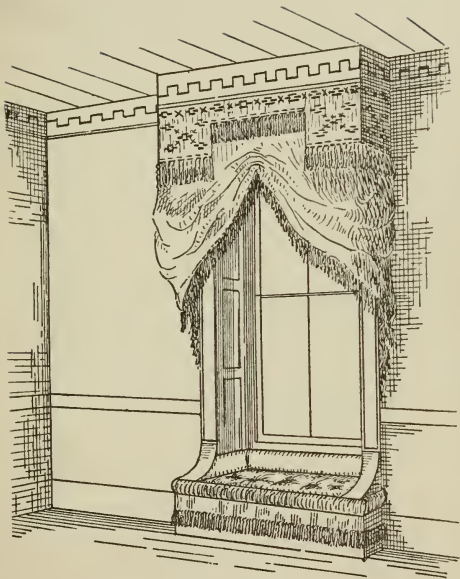
"The walls are not thick enough."

"I'm aware of that, but they can be made so in some places, and in others the seats may project into the room. It is better to invest six inches more, even if the amount must be taken

from the capital stock of the room, than to waste the window-stool already on hand. A well-cushioned seat by the window, low and wide, is always popular, and none the less so because it in nowise prevents an unlimited indulgence in easy-chairs in the near vicinity. Where these seats project into the room, as they must in some cases, I have a fancy that the curtains should be brought out over them, making a sort of canopy, and reaching quite to the ceiling."

"Certainly it may, but this will totally hide your fantastic little heads."

"Precisely, and that is my argument for making these window-frames (he meant casings again) according to the exigencies of the case. For instance, this wide window in the library must have the permanent seat and the canopied curtain or lambrequin. Every vestige of the wood-work will be as completely hidden as if it were behind the plastering. Why, then, must I waste



HELP FOR A ROUGH ROAD.

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my hard-earned dollars upon it? A narrow, plain piece answers every purpose."

"But the canopied curtain is not a fixed fact; you may change your mind."

"I can't change my mind in the face of a mathematical demonstration. The seat is indispensable, it will be built with the house. The curtain is a necessary consequence of the seat. If such cosey and retired *tête-à-têtes* were more common, the course of true love would n't be half as rough as it now is."

"I'm also aware of that. But the man to whom you sell the house may think the rough course is the best, or have other good reasons for dispensing with the drapery."

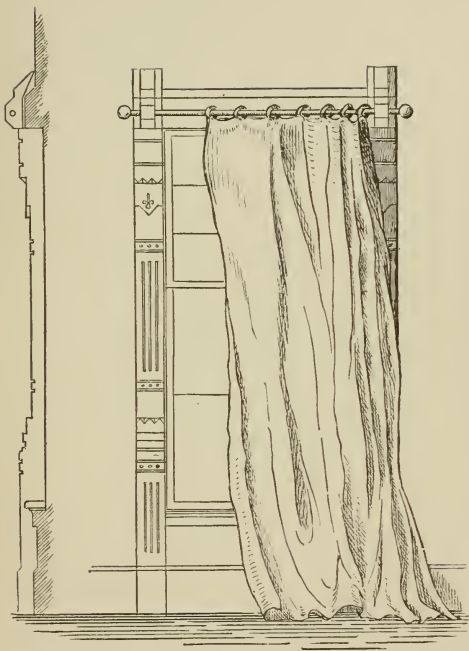
"I shall never sell the house."

"Or leave it to your sons?"

"Well, well, make them all alike if you must, but as simple as possible, and if my sons see fit to disclose the nakedness of my work after I

am gone, it will be at their own peril and expense."

The Colonel touched here upon what is to me one of the most interesting points in domestic architecture. Usually the main opportunity for the exercise of individual taste is in the movable fixtures of the house. Even when a man feels certain, humanly speaking, that he is building for his own permanent abode, the thought that the house may pass out of his own into strange hands, and the consideration of its possible value in case of voluntary or compelled sale, deter him from indulging in any personal whims and fancies, which would make it more really and truly his own than it can possibly be by the mere paying of the bills. Herein lies the difference between a house and a home. The house may be sold, the home never. The house has a market value which is the same to one man as to another; the home is above all price to him who



BUTTRESS AND BRACKETS.

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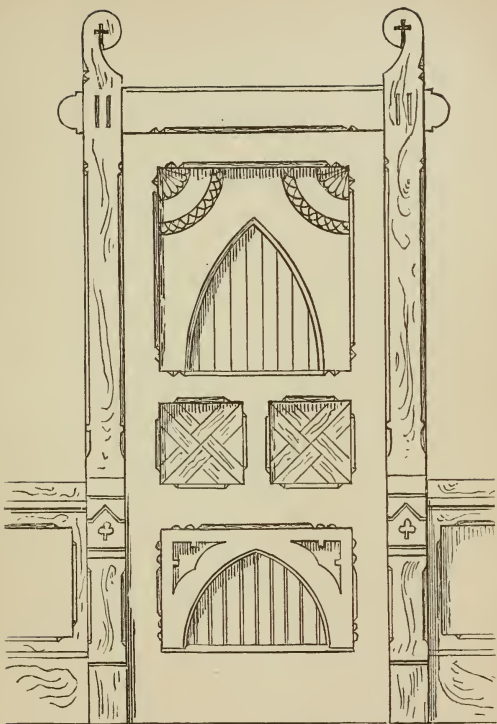
creates it for himself; who has wrought into it a part of his own personality.

Blessed are they who have homes.

It further appeared concerning the casings that their faces need not always be clean shaven, that is, in the same vertical plane throughout. If the width of the window-seat or the thickness of the wainscot or base requires more room, the lower part may be augmented in buttress fashion, or they may be brought forward at the top, — *not* by way of ornamental cap, — door and window casings should n't wear their caps in the house, — but in the form of brackets for the support of the rod or bar that carries the curtains; which rod or bar may be as simple as a broom-handle or gorgeous as an Indian diadem.

The provision for hanging pictures, which was also discussed, is a matter of absolute necessity in these artistic times. The old fashion of pounding the plastering all around the room to

find a spot that gives a solid sound, then punching holes with a scratch-awl all about it, in the hope of finding a stud, driving a nail or screwing a screw into the crack between two springing laths and finally trusting a heavy gilt frame and a big sheet of glass to the treacherous support of crumbling mortar, is not popular. Neither is the older fashion of nailing a "cleat" two or three feet long across a couple of studs in the region where the one picture or the looking-glass is to be set up, adapted to the wants of the present generation. How many pictures will bedeck a room, or what light will be required for them, cannot be foretold. Every Christmas brings a new one, every auction sale furnishes a "gem" or a "bargain," for which a place must be found. Hence the need of an unbroken line of support. Instead of making this a bald, bare necessity, obtrusively stuck up, and saying as plainly as a moulding can say, "I'm a gallows whereon



A LEAF FROM THE PROPHECY.

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pictures are to be hanged," it is just as easy and ten times more delightful to make it a component part of the essential work, either of the constructive casings and cornices, or of the color decoration, or of both.

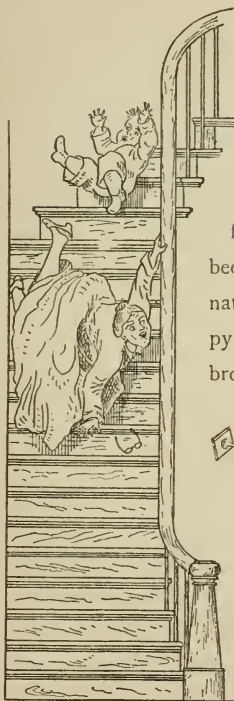




SEVENTH DAY.

STAIRWAYS AND TILES.

IT has been an unfortunate thing for country homes that, instead of developing the inconveniences and discomforts of old-fashioned buildings by natural growth, to answer the needs of the higher civilization and more refined demands of domestic life in the present time, many of the most important attempts at improvement have been blind imitations of city dwellings. Customs and styles, some of them awkward necessities, entailed by want of space and other limitations, have been transplanted to the open fields, where only their

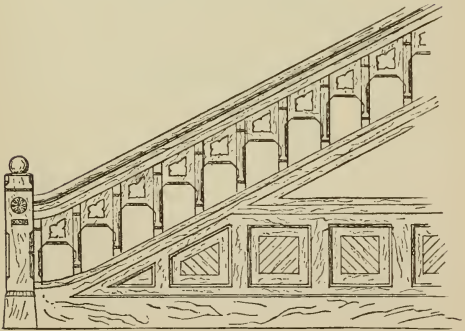
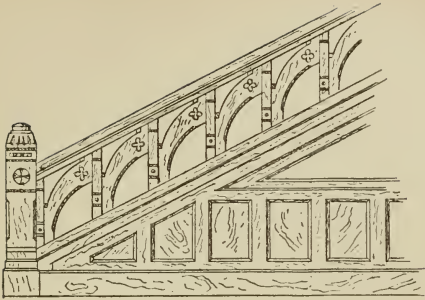


A SWIFT DESCENT.

awkwardness remains. Staircases are a notable example of this. The old-fashioned steep and narrow steps, with their short runs and frequent turns, have not been allowed to develop by natural selection and a happy survival of the fittest into broad, easy avenues of ascent, filling, perhaps, an entire square room, but dwellers in the "unpaved districts" have persisted in building long, slender, precip-

itous step-ladders, swelling out at the bottom with a flow of curved platforms, making a pretence of breadth where there is no breadth, and terminating at the top in a twisted vortex, — a dangerous trap for old people and little folks. These things are often inexcusable in city houses, where, owing to their more constant use and greater extent, there is the utmost need of ease and safety. In the country they are always an unpardonable offence. Until a man can afford space for an easy progress toward the upper regions he should abide below.

In remodelling the old house, St. Augustine aimed first to secure an ample staircase, and generously set apart one of the main rooms for the purpose. These stairs have been an interesting study, and I have to-day completed the designs to the satisfaction of all parties. When they were first under discussion, I argued against the common turned balusters, which seem to me



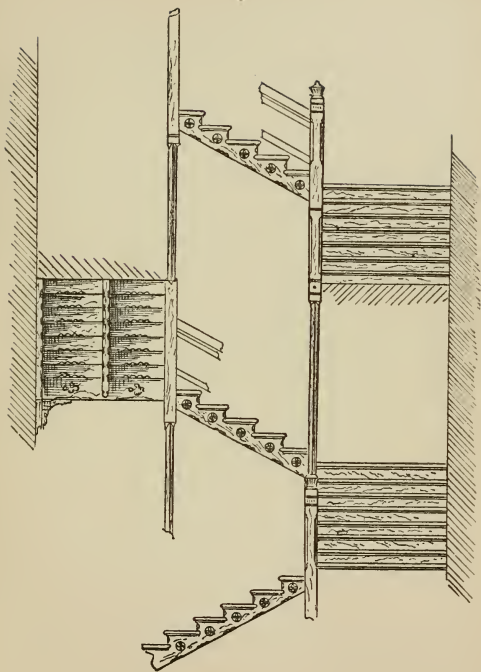
SUBSTITUTES FOR BALUSTERS.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

most appropriate for some material of uniform grain and color that will show to best advantage the lights and shadows of carved, turned, or moulded work, — as stone, ebony, painted wood, or iron. This staircase is to be of Western ash, the marked graining of which would mar the beauty of form suited to a separate baluster. Furthermore, there are so many of them! A symmetrical figure a couple of feet long, and two, three, or four inches in diameter, should be very beautiful to justify the existence of a gross or two of isolated specimens exactly alike, “all in a bunch.” It is wearisome to think of the thousands of stairways with a turned walnut post at the bottom, a flattened walnut rail having a shepherd’s crook at the top, and tapering walnut sticks in pairs all the way up the side. Whether it was the plea for variety or for the eternal fitness that prevailed I have forgotten, but the turned balusters were given up.

On delivering the plans this morning I found to my dismay that they contained one fatal defect. The steps were satisfactory, — six inches high and twelve inches wide. The entire width was sufficient (five feet in the clear); the design for the balustrade, if that can be called a balustrade which has no balusters, was approved; the newel post, that most trying feature, passed its examination creditably; and the broad landings, on two of which are windows with wide seats beneath, and on the third a tall recess where the old Dutch clock will repeat its solemn, “Never, forever,” were reckoned a decided success. But, alas! the back of the stairs, being panelled in the most orthodox fashion, looked in the eyes of St. Augustine like the under side of the top berth in a sleeping-car, and the upper flight seemed to be suspended, like Mahomet’s coffin, midway between the cellar and the roof. I protested that unless we walked like the antipodes, with our



STRENGTH AND LIGHTNESS.

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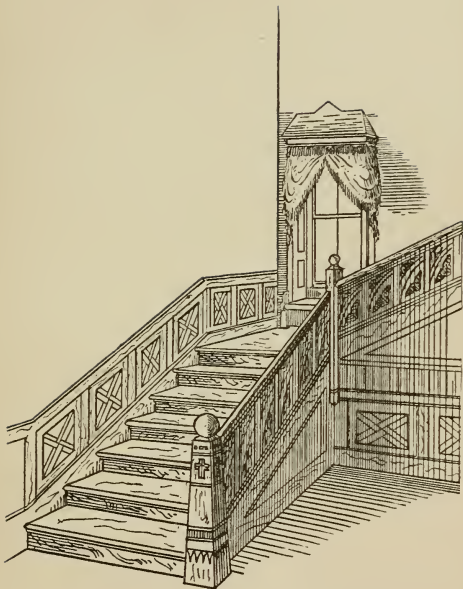
heads toward the nadir, steps on the under side were useless, and that the flight, apparently held in critical suspense, would, in fact, safely carry a regiment of soldiers to his battlements if occasion required. But he was persistent, the treads must show from beneath and the "turning new-els" must reach from the ground-floor to the topmost flight. The plans have been changed accordingly, and I'm satisfied that the result will be excellent. The whole staircase will appear less ponderous than if finished at the back in the usual way, and will seem what it is, light and strong.

"In the elder days of art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part ;
For the gods see"

straight through lath and plaster, and stone walls hide nothing from their penetrating sight. I think we may sometimes get the better of the

inquisitive gods by contriving our work so that there shall be no unseen parts, letting the actual construction of the house itself, as well as of its furniture, be apparent, not only to celestial but to mortal eyes.

Of course a staircase contains intrinsic elements of grandeur, but it is a mistake to try to thrust grandeur upon it by starting with a huge post or column, which, according to the old interpretation, it would be no sin to worship, since it is in the likeness of no created thing below or above, continuing the exercises on the back of a hand-rail that would carry an express train; setting a colonnade of solid balusters at one side to match a solid wainscot at the other, and backing the whole with deep panels of hardwood, attached in some mysterious manner to the sloping surface behind and below. When all this is crowded into a straight and narrow hall, one can't help thinking that the broad road



A BROAD LANDING.

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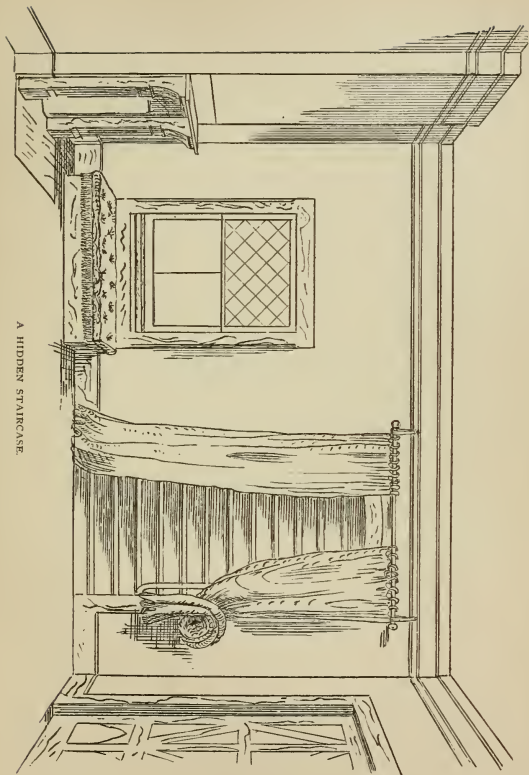
ASTOR, LENOX AND
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is, to say the least, the more attractive. When there is not room for a genuine magnificence in the getting-up-stairs department, it is far better that these useful members should retire to some quiet corner, and there in humble simplicity lift the members of the household to a loftier place by safe and easy steps.

Because it is desirable to have as many rooms as possible in direct communication with the hall and also with the stairs, the one commonly contains the other, but the same convenience results if the main or central hall and the staircase hall are contiguous, though separated. In fact, there is often no need of a staircase "hall" at all. In small houses, especially, it is better to enclose them completely with doors at top and bottom, than to compel them to stand, fully exposed in their narrow length, gathering their skirts about them for fear of encroaching by one precious inch on the contracted passage at one side,

which is called in vain exaggeration a "front hall." Back stairs are frequently thus enclosed and are usually steep, dark, and narrow, hence there is a prejudice against enclosing the principal flight in a similar manner. But if properly graded, well lighted, and furnished with a hand-rail at each side, such a stairway is most convenient and sensible, as well as economical in construction and in the saving of heat when that is desirable. Likewise, the little hall or entry is ten times more pleasant and valuable when not cut up and blockaded by the stairs. Instead of a door at the foot, an arched opening with a movable curtain may be used to good purpose, and, of course, the doors at the top may be omitted.

Falling down stairs is not a legitimate occupation for adults, but the liability to fall, and the danger in case of a slip or a misstep, is much diminished if each flight has at least one



A HIDDEN STAIRCASE.

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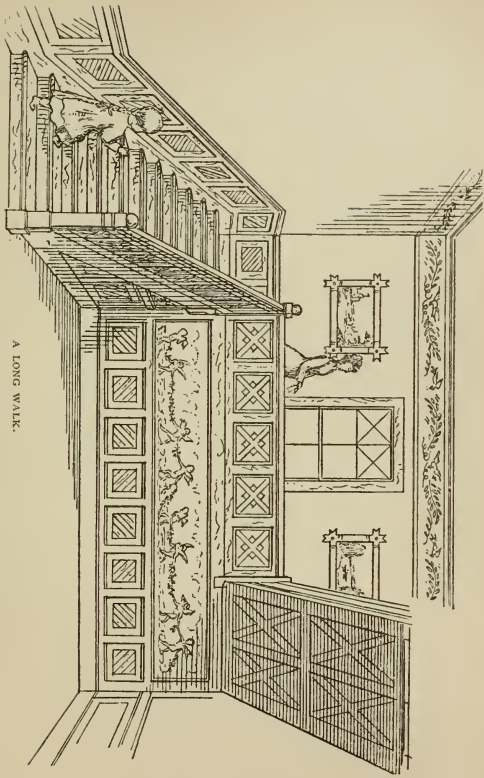
broad, square landing or turn. These came into St. Augustine's plan admirably, though if the stairs had been narrower and the ceilings higher I would have introduced a long, horizontal walk next the outer wall, not only as a diversion and a rest in climbing, but for the sake of a pleasant interior effect. The room which they occupy being nearly square, there is virtually no floor in the second and third stories, only a gallery of about the same width as the stairs themselves, giving access to the various adjacent chambers.

I see no reason why both these latter features may not be available in small houses of the simplest construction without loss of room or convenience, without much increase of cost, and with great gain in appearance.

My days with St. Augustine are busy ones, and this has been no exception. There seems to be no end of "points" in the thorough fin-

ishing of a large house. Having disposed of the stairs, we attacked the tiles, beginning with the kitchen. Here there is to be a dado four and a half feet high, of plain white six-inch tile, with a brown base at the bottom and a blue and white border at the top. The bath-rooms are to be similarly dadoed, and will also have tile floors. On these, rugs will be needed—small, woolly islands—for bare feet in cold weather and after a hot bath. The fireplaces are lined fully with tile to the exclusion of soapstone, fire-brick, or iron, and the hearths correspond. Some of the mantels have borders next the fire, and in one the tiles extend above the shelf in an unbroken mass.

In selecting and arranging these there is the same difficulty as with paper-hangings,—combinations cannot be judged by isolated specimens. Yet I find little satisfaction in anything but the combinations. Separate tiles are sometimes



A LONG WALK.

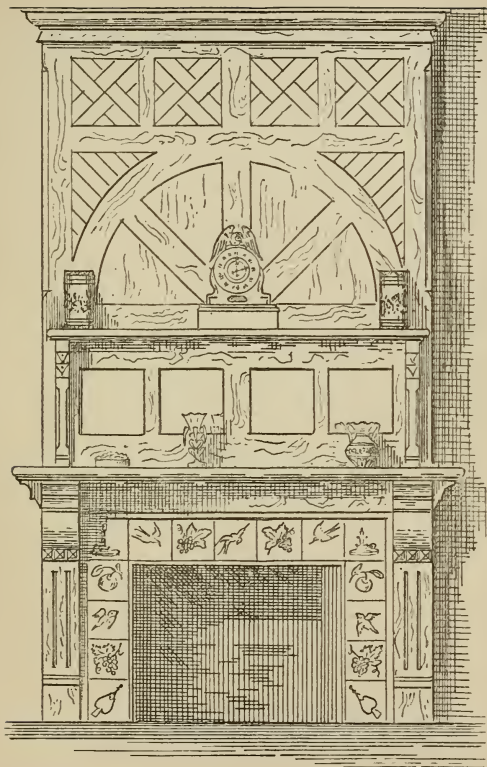
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very beautiful, well worthy of being set up as ornaments, like vases or other pottery, but there is certainly an incongruity in using them as decorations for wood-work in situations where their durable quality is of no value. Inserted in the top of a sideboard, a heavy table, or a wooden shelf, either to cover the entire surface or for an ornamental border, at the base of a newel post, next the fire, in a chimney-piece made of wood, and in various other locations, their hardness justifies their position, but they should not be set scattered about "promiscuous like" in pilasters, corners, and prominent places where they have no meaning except by reason of color and pattern. This is worse than new cloth on an old garment; it is like a cast-iron fence around a country door-yard, a binding of brass on a velvet gown. If color and figures are needed, paint-brush and picture-books will supply them in more consistent form.

Tiles will also be used as a setting for the furnace registers, which stand, as they ought, in the walls near the floor and not in the floor itself. Some of them will occupy conspicuous situations, and although no wealth of ornament in bronze, nickel, or gilt will add one gleam of picturesque sentiment to the "hot, black breath" of an indirect heating apparatus, the registers are important features, and are entitled to certain marks of distinction. The debatable ground between the hot iron and the combustible wood around it is properly filled with some non-conducting material. Soapstone borders are common, marble or slate may be used, but tiles are of course more ornamental than either.





TOO COSTLY FOR EVERY ROOM.

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EIGHTH DAY.

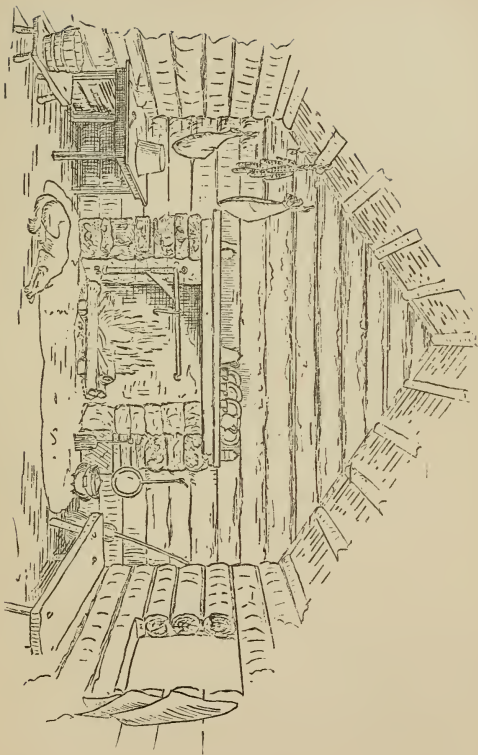
FIREPLACES AND BIG WINDOWS.

LIKE the undevout astronomer, the man who does not stand in awe before the marvellous growth and the wondrous works of humanity is a fool or a cynic. Among these achievements, what is grander in its result, grander in its evidence of peace on earth and good-will among men, than the fact that, sitting in my room, away from all human sights and sounds, I can yet speak with the tongue of men and angels—if I understand the language—to every mortal being who has a recognized habitation in the civilized world? I can call living

spirits from the vasty deeps of restless activity on which the sun never sets, and they will come at my call. Though dwelling in the uttermost parts of the sea, they are all in immediate communication with me, and I with them. The magic wand that summons each individual to my presence,—the “open sesame” that admits me to the audience-chamber of mankind, is a postal-card or a stamp. It is wonderful in its result, glorious in its promise. Talk of writing the book of Job on a half-dime! Why, I could write a whole library of moral reflections on a postage-stamp.

The most serious danger in these days of epistolary correspondence is that the art of clear and truthful speech will be forgotten. If a man has any important communication to make, even to his next-door neighbor, he writes him, or her, a letter. If he has a message for the public, he spreads his thought upon paper, and the mails

THE BEGINNING OF CIVILIZATION.



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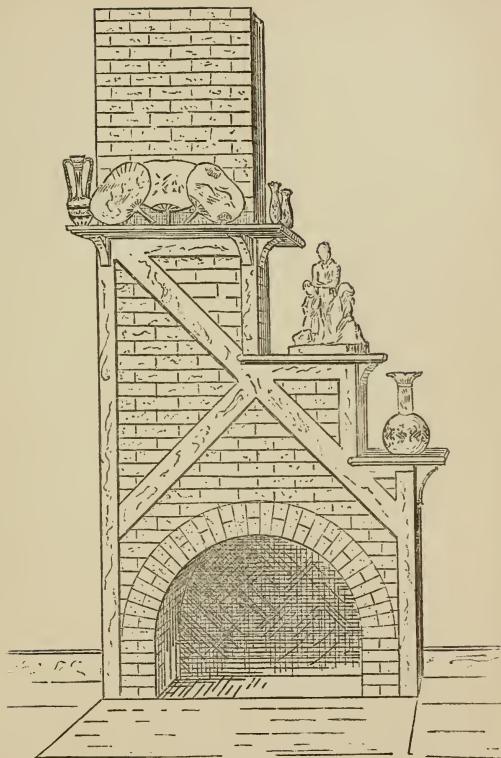
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spread the papers. In business, the fashion of correspondence has some decided advantages. The ability of a man to write his own name is established. His wishes and opinions are likely to be more accurately and briefly expressed by writing than through the more facile medium of vocal utterance. Likewise, statements "in black and white" are less liable to fade from memory, or, chameleon-like, to change their coloring. At all events, I find business transacted wholly "by mail" quite as satisfactory in its results as that which has the benefit of the "word-o'-mouth" encounter.

One of my familiar spirits, a neighbor who lives only six or eight hundred miles away, spoke to me this morning,—or, rather, he spoke yesterday, and I heard his cry this morning,—about the fireplaces. His estimates are fully made, and the margin left for a fireplace "in every room but the pantry" is insufficient.

“At the lowest,” he exclaims, “the grates alone will cost fifteen dollars and the mantels will average twenty-five dollars more. I can, indeed, set up in two or three of the rooms the mantels without the grates, letting the summer-piece serve as a register for the furnace heat, but even then they will average nearly forty dollars each. So, unless you can explain how ten times forty may be made to equal one hundred and fifty, I must give up my fireplaces.”

“I wish the multiplication-table would always be as accommodating,” I reply on the under side of my postage-stamp. “With wood at twelve dollars a cord, the fireplaces may be an expensive luxury to feed, but if you are willing to go back to first principles, you need not deny yourself an unlimited indulgence in the article itself. For the Indian’s wigwam, an institution for which I have great respect, a bare spot of earth, two or three feet in diameter, is the sole requi-



A SIMPLE NICHE.

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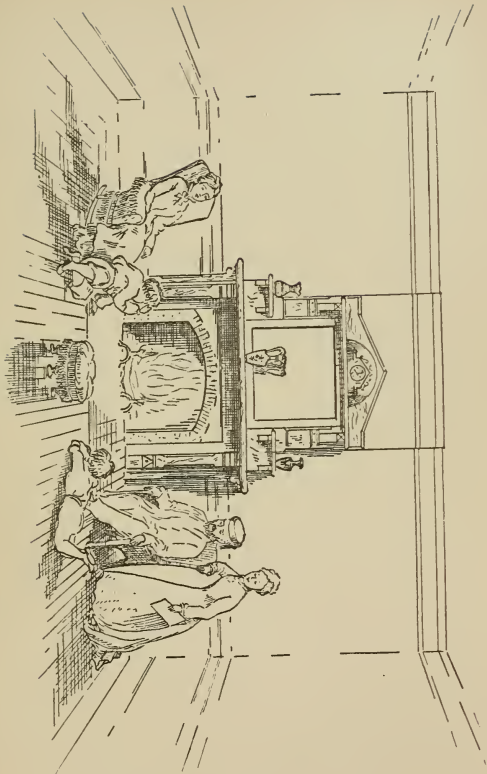
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site. In the log cabin of the pioneer, which I hold in still higher reverence, a hollow pyramid of durable stones, roughly heaped together and pointed perhaps with clay, diffuses the warmth and comfort in which the germs of a higher civilization begin to grow. For the home of an honest man, than which no worthier object of veneration can be found on the face of the earth, a simple niche of any incombustible material with an outlet for smoke and a hearth for the ashes and the household gods, is the fundamental essential of that feature, without which no house is complete. Do not think of giving it up. Indeed, if you can have but one, the house or the fireplace, give up the house and keep the fire.

“That is strong advice; but if you wish to test its soundness, build a house as big as you please, finish and furnish it in the most elegant manner known to modern extravagance, fill the rooms with fountains and flowers, per-

fumes and pictures, and heat them with hot air from the regions below,—all but one. In that one build upon an ample hearth a glowing fire of hickory-wood, and in the presence of that genial blaze upon the bare floor of the unfinished room will congregate all that is good and kind and lovely of the household. Which will you have, the house without these, or the fireplace with them? Which will be most like home? Some time in the dim past we were all fire-worshippers, and in the far future we shall be absorbed in the glorious brightness of which the feeble flickering blaze of our mortal existence is a typical spark. Our love for the warmth and brightness of the fire is not a thing to be cultivated or analyzed, it is instinctive, a part of every healthy, unperverted nature.

“ I suppose the sumptuous treatment of the fireplace and its accessories is the involuntary tribute paid to the beauty of the fire, but the attempt



CENTRE OF ATTRACTION.

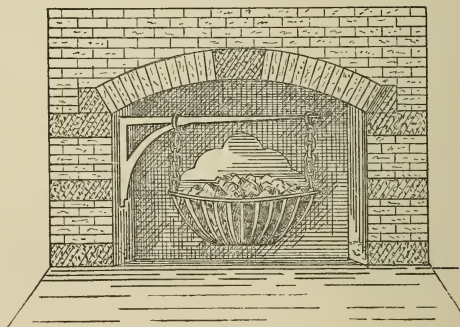
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to enhance this, or any other innate beauty, by ornamental surroundings is commonly a miserable failure. It glows as brightly, sheds its radiance as freely and as far, from the uncouth chimney of the backwoods cabin as from the polished and plated bars of the grand *salon*; and although that may be reckoned a crude taste which prefers the uncouth chimney, it is surely a narrow view which fails to see the comparative insignificance of all surroundings, whether coarse or fine.

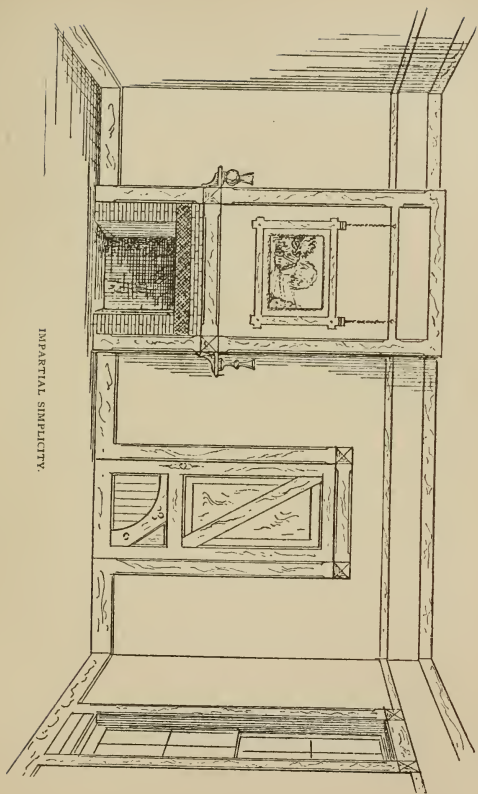
“ Given a chimney starting from the ground, as every chimney ought, and five dollars will make a fireplace in each room through which it passes. Common bricks well laid are not incompatible with the finishing and furnishing of a family sitting-room or chamber. They may be left bare, painted or coated with Portland cement. If constantly used, the back will burn out after a time, unless protected by a slab of soapstone, a lining of fire-brick, or a plate of cast-iron. If coal is to

be burned, a cast-iron basket or some form of grate must stand in the recess. This may be set in the brick-work, rest upon its own legs or swing from a crane, and should cost four or five cents a pound. That is, in brief, the simplest form of



SWINGING FROM A CRANE.

a fireplace. It is all that is necessary for the highest beauty and comfort that a fireplace can give. Its modifications are endless. A shelf made of wood, slate, marble, or malachite may be placed above it to hold fanciful match-safes, dis-



IMPARTIAL SIMPLICITY.

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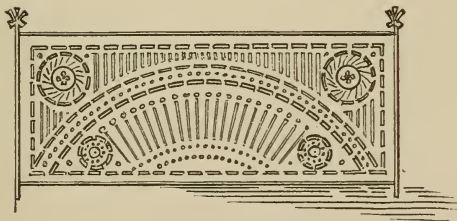
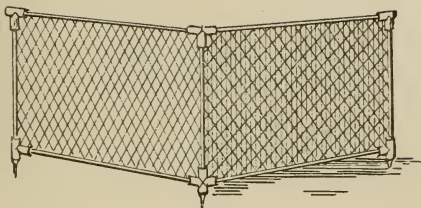
ASTOR, LENOX AND
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torted bottles, photographs in straw frames, dust and ashes. It may be surmounted by French-plate mirrors, flanked by panelled buttresses, carved owls, or allegorical pictures upon tiles. But these delightful surroundings are not essential to the fireplace, which may safely be left in unadorned simplicity, like the door and window casings. To our accustomed eyes the tablet and ornamental adjuncts seem indispensable. The fire will lose nothing if they are left in the shops where they were made.

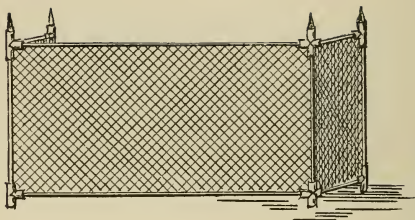
“A fireplace for burning wood will need a fender or a watchman. It is not necessary that the fender should be of solid brass, handed down from some colonial governor’s library. A modern wire netting on a frame of gas-pipe, a sheet of thin brass with simple perforations made at any machine-shop, or any other expedient of Yankee ingenuity, to let the heat out and keep the sparks in, is equally effective. Whether the hearth is of

pressed bricks, slates, or tiles, let it be dark in color and vast in size. There will be so much the less carpet and so much the more comfort.

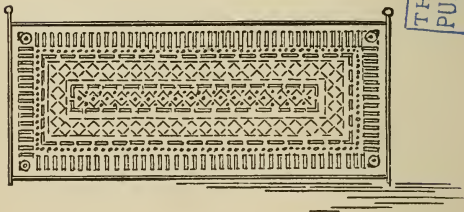
“Your notion of building a monstrous mantel, by way of mouthpiece to a furnace-pipe, is simply atrocious. If a shelf is needed for bric-à-brac, let there be a shelf for that purpose. If a rest is required for a large mirror, build it. If the furnace-pipes for the rooms above, or for the room itself, must be covered by some sort of case projecting into the room, let the case appear, and treat it in such fashion that it shall be a pleasant feature and not a conspicuous sham. It is true that the furnace heat often comes through these pseudo-grates by way of a ‘summer-piece,’ but that only makes the deceit the more exasperating. Why not buy an upright piano with the inside arrangements all left out, in order to look musical, a thousand or two of book-covers glued to blocks of wood that your library may have a



BRASS WATCHMAN.



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BRASS WATCHMAN.

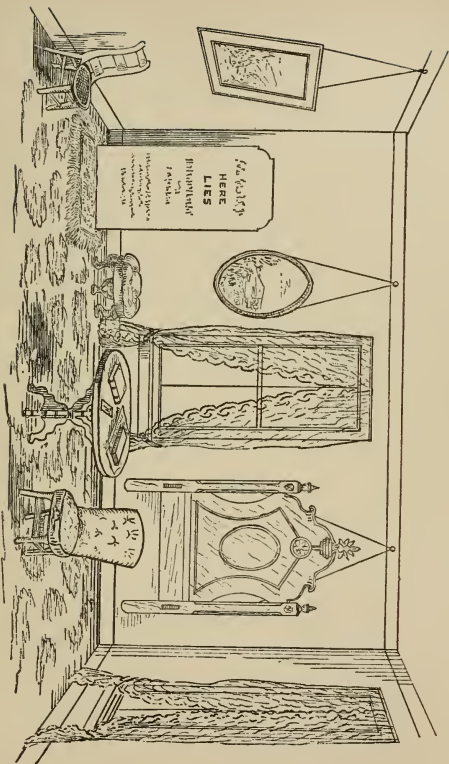
literary appearance, and keep a lot of wax-work and colored water on your sideboard to imitate fruit and wine? When you begin to indulge in shams you cannot draw the line arbitrarily. They all belong to the same family, and a free pass for one is good for the whole crowd. If you are pleased to consider these useless mantels as decorative objects, pure and simple, I can only say, tastes differ. For myself, I should as soon think of setting up, by way of parlor ornament, a second-hand tombstone, or the carved head-board of a two-story walnut bedstead."

I should not have felt justified in suggesting such a reckless indulgence in open fires without giving the preliminary caution that their constant use as the sole means of supplying warmth in very cold weather will prove an expensive luxury. In a furnace-heated dwelling they may well be furnished to every room in which the social meeting even of two or three is liable to occur, or in

which a suffering invalid may ever be compelled to abide.

Where each room is dependent upon its own resources for warmth, an isolated stove is much more economical, as everybody knows, than a fireplace. These patent iron heating-machines with oil-cloth underneath and Russia pipe above, with their clatter of shovel and tongs, poker and ash-pan, are often looked upon as necessary evils while in use, and unmitigated nuisances when cold. On this account the horrible custom has arisen of "taking the stove down"—which means carrying it off to grow rusty during the warm weather—on the first spring days when the generous heat of the sun fills the mistress of the house with an ardent but mistaken faith that summer has come. Out of this custom proceed coughs, colds, neuralgias, and "rheumatics," soreness of the joints and blueness of spirits.

At present the most practicable mode of mak-



ORNAMENTAL SHAMS.

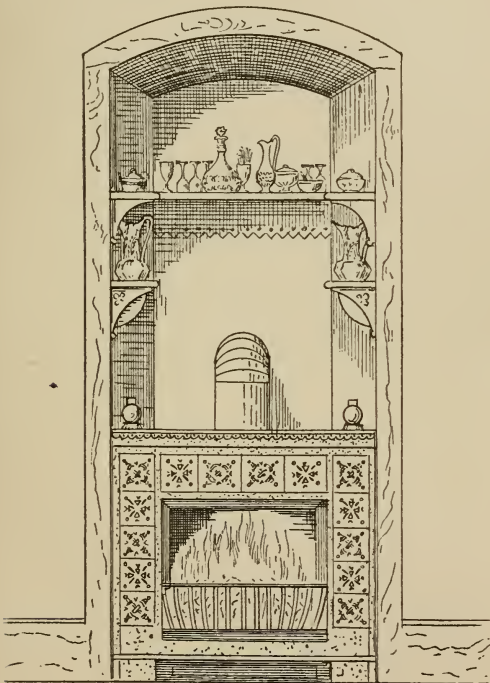
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ing a stove charming in December, inoffensive in August, and ready for use at all times, is to build for its accommodation a recess or alcove either in the corner or at one side of the room. This may be arched at the top; if very narrow, the sides should be of brick or of extra-thick plastering upon iron lath. Shelves or brackets, for non-explosive ornaments, may partially occupy the upper portion, and the stove itself may have a face as open and cheerful as any grate in the land, if such stoves can be found. They will be, of course, when there is a positive demand for them. In August the recess becomes a closet; the stove, hidden by a pretty screen or a short door, occupies the lower part, while the ornaments before mentioned look serenely down from above; or the whole interior may be gracefully hidden by violet velvet curtains, swung by silver hooks from a golden rod. A simpler material, known to housekeepers as "mosquito bar," may be used for

economy's sake. The amount of heat thrown into a room from a stove thus situated will depend somewhat upon the form and construction of the recess, but it is certain that much more will be saved than with a common grate, from which so much speeds away up chimney to its everlasting source, the sun.

For the benefit of another neighbor, nearer home, I have just been discussing the same subject, — the sun and its light. If it were not for the blessed decree by which he is compelled to shine upon the just and the unjust with a beneficence that not even blue glass can wholly intercept or avert, it would not be strange if he should withhold his beams from us in righteous indignation at our ingratitude. Not through wide, free openings and with thankful hearts do we receive the fulness of the blessing, but with ignorant conceit, and through windows narrow and low, blinded and curtained, stained, painted, and unclean.



SUITED TO ALL SEASONS.

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It is not, however, the moral or sanitary considerations that trouble Mistress Abigail. Her anxiety is in regard to the interior arrangements. "How can I curtain a great square window? How can I open it, and why not have two half as large?" is the burden of her complaint.

And the substance of my reply is, that it is almost impossible to arrange drapery with ease and grace for anything but a wide window. That facility of opening is not dependent upon width, and that one window five feet wide is in many cases as much better than two of two and a half feet as the two are than ten of three inches each. Better for light, better for warmth, better for interior furnishing, better for observation, better for the illuminating effect upon the whole apartment.

The persistent way in which a stupid custom perpetuates itself is most tormenting. There is absolutely no reason why there should be a

“regular” size for window-glass or width for window-curtains, or any regular mode of placing or finishing them. The finest effects are often the most irregular and unexpected. Mrs. Abigail ventures to have one wide window by way of experiment. Twenty-five years hence, her daughter, remembering the happy incidents of her childhood, will have two. So tedious are the blows by which an ancient custom is destroyed.





NINTH DAY.

RENOVATING OLD HOUSES, VARIOUS DECORATIONS AND FURNISHINGS.



RECENT writer on the subject compares the relation of architect and client in its personal aspects to that existing between a man and his family physician, his legal adviser, or, perhaps, his pastor, to each of whom he reveals certain of his private concerns which he does not discuss freely with others. The more I observe of the building of homes the more I am inclined to maintain the dignity of my profession by claiming for it the first rank in this respect. Of course when

we find ourselves liable to trespass or be trespassed against, we disclose our designs or our dangers to some representative of the stern majesty of law, whose ability to make white black and black white is most renowned. Likewise when tormented by physical pangs or spiritual woe, and in what we vaguely and ignorantly call "great crises," we seek those who can ease our bodies and shrive our souls. But trespassing isn't the normal condition of civilized man, whatever the dogmatists may say, and small crises are much more common than big ones. In brief, most men are more intimately affected by the character of their homes than by the poisons they absorb, whether doctrinal, legal, or medical. It is true, "houses" and "homes" are not identical, but the relationship is very close and peculiar. In studying for a plan or for counsel I confess my inability to draw the line between the material and the spiritual, the eco-

nomical and the moral, the sanitary and the æsthetic, the useful and the beautiful.

When a man asks me for a plan and design for a *house*, I can furnish it without knowing whether he is the czar of Russia or an Iowa granger. If he desires a *home*, the case is different. I want to know who his grandfather was and where his wife was "raised"; to what church he belongs, or does n't belong; which way he votes, and what he thinks of Darwin,—if he thinks at all; how he made his money, and whether he believes in a future state of rewards and punishments; the size of his family, present and prospective; the number of his servants, and how he treats them; his own business, and how his daughters spend their time; whether they are domestic, musical, literary, or stylish; how many furs and silk dresses are annually consumed; whether he buys his groceries at wholesale or retail, and all about the family plate and

other heirlooms. I want to know the number and quality of his guests; whether he drinks wine with his dinner; his views on sanitary questions; the state of his nerves and of those belonging to the family in general; his social habits as to hospitality, as to cleanliness, — with special reference to wash-bowls, side entrances, and floors; whether he is a slave to the “vile weed”; at what hour he seeks his downy couch; and also if he takes care of the furnace himself and attends to the “chores.” Now, a tenth part of these questions put to a stranger or a casual acquaintance would appall the most inquisitive typical Yankee, — if anybody knows where he can be found. I can only remove the difficulty by establishing as soon as possible such a degree of mutual confidence that all these things “come of themselves.”

The foregoing moral reflections have no special reference to the work of to-day. They were

inspired by a visit from Sister Jane, who always fills me with a most solemn sense of my great responsibility in the matter of home-building. "It is not the mere spending of money," quoth she, "it is the shaping of human destiny." She brought me some raw material to work upon in the persons of her husband's youngest brother, a blushing bridegroom, and his pretty wife. They came not only for a visit, but for counsel. They have bought a new house — new to them, but old in fact — in the town where they live, an awkward, uncompromising affair, illy-contrived, low "between joints," and what shall be done with the drunken sailor is a conundrum too deep for them to solve unaided.

In general, the making over of old houses should be fought out on one of two lines. Either make an entire reconstruction that will cost more than a civil war and leave only a small portion of the original foundation-stones by way

of relic of the former mansion, or else let the essential structure severely alone, relying for all desired improvements upon paint, paper, treatment, and little adjuncts and accessories within and without that can be appended without cutting away to make room for them. I'm inclined to think that the dusting and trimming and shaping of the holes in the old garment to make ready for the new patches often costs more than to make a new garment out of whole cloth. But there is great satisfaction in trying to improve on the work of our predecessors. Human nature seems to exult in the visible triumph of pulling down work that has been outgrown, and replacing it on the spot with something better.

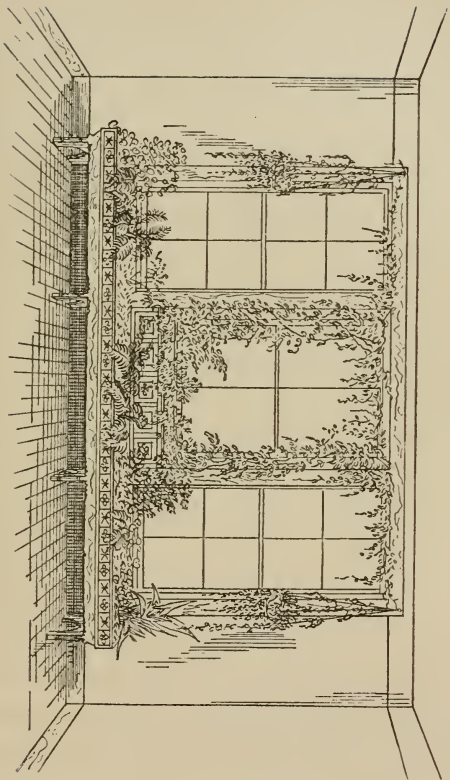
Sister Jane's brother-in-law adopts the second course, the only visible addition to the old house being an entrance hall, not to contain the stairs, but large enough to serve as a small reception-room. As this will be wholly new, I advise him

to plane the joists and studs that constitute its frame, and then to lath and plaster between these timbers, leaving them in view to be "cornered," if he pleases, and painted in colors, sober or gay. If the stock is reasonably good, they may be oiled simply, and left to grow darker with age. In any case there will be no incongruity between the new and the old work, for this visible construction belongs to all time, like a black silk gown, and is rarely out of place in any company. This mode of finishing inner walls and ceilings would be practicable and appropriate for an entire cottage to be permanently used, although by an unaccountable freak of popular fancy it is not supposed to be possible except at seaside and other summer resorts, at many of which all that makes life charming is the fashion of ignoring formalities and conventional codes in building, as well as in other matters,—a fashion all the better part of which

might safely be adopted for constant home use.

The bride, like many who are older and wiser, was unable to comprehend the actual worth of things which she has never seen. The most vivid illustrations and the clearest theories are as nothing to actual sight. We therefore adjourned after dinner to John's house, wherein are to be found various and sundry specimens of home work in bodily form. With the privilege of near neighbors we walked in at the basement door and found ourselves at once in the dining-room. This apartment proved especially interesting to the bridegroom, because, like the rooms of his own house, the ceiling is low. The substance of the lesson he learned ultimately but indirectly upon this point, was to ignore the fact and divert attention from it by introducing other striking features that are quite independent of height. Naturally, the windows were

JOHN'S WINDOW BOXES.



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seen first, — a group of three occupying fully three fourths of one end of the room, the central window projecting quite beyond the outer face of the thick stone wall, and having deep jambs. On the wide stool stands a box filled with climbing plants that cover the sides and hang from the top in graceful festoons, as vines always hang if left to themselves. At the two outer corners of the side windows hang baskets also filled with trailing plants. Not those enormous affairs of distorted knots and roots that look like a large family of reddish-brown serpents in deadly conflict, nor yet the ornate receptacles for which the only suitable tenants are the most aristocratic and exclusive exotics, — but good honest earthen pots that expect to be hidden, and usually are, by a luxuriant growth of verdure and bloom, that only asks a handful of rich, moist earth with plenty of sunlight and air. I pity plants that are imprisoned in stylish vases.

They seem like children who are always dressed in "company clothes," — not objects of disinterested, deep-seated affection, but of shallow, selfish vanity. I think those people should never be intrusted with flowers or children who do not love and reverence them, whatever soil they grow in or clothes they wear.

Directly in front of the three windows stands a long, narrow box filled with earth, in the middle of which is a bed of dark, rich ferns, and in the ends, geraniums, heliotropes, and grateful nasturtiums, that grow so freely and bloom perennially. We charged John with attempting a vain deceit in covering the outside of the boxes with a pattern of oil-cloth that resembles tiles so closely as to mislead the uninitiated. He protests that it is no more deception than paper-hangings on the walls, that oil-cloth is the proper material for covering flower-boxes, and its resemblance to tile a mere accident. Perhaps so,

COMPANY CLOTHES.



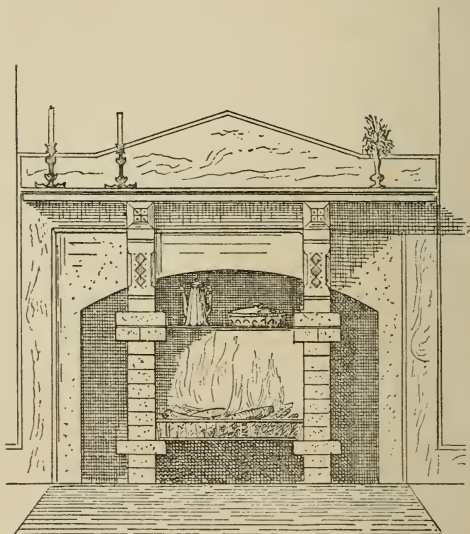
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but, whatever the motive, the whole arrangement is so attractive that the height of the ceiling is quite unnoticed.

The fireplace at one side of the room astonished the bridegroom, who had never seen its like. When John explained how he had it built, originally very large and according to the antique model, how "the old thing would n't draw," how he bought an old grate and a plate of cast-iron at a junk-shop, stole some bricks and mortar, laid up a couple of thin walls as far apart as the length of the grate, supported the grate near the bottom and put the plate on the top,—all inside the cavity of the antique original,—how he let the top bricks of the two side walls project a little, set a short wooden block on the top of each pier like *Patience* on a monument, and then clapped a shelf on these,—the bridegroom fairly glowed with admiration and delight. He declared he would have six exactly like it in his

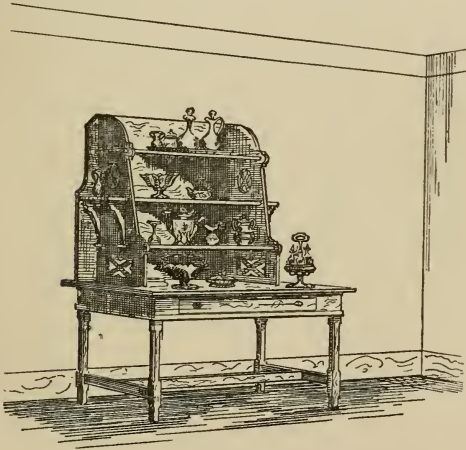
own house, which is filled with fireplaces too big to use in their present condition. Without doubt



HOMEMADE FIREPLACE.

he can so do if he chooses, but it is to be hoped that he will vary the pattern.

Opposite the fireplace stands an article of furniture that John says must be a "sideboard," because it is made of boards and stands at one



ONE EVENING'S WORK.

side of the room. It is a plain table, long and narrow, with a drawer in the front side and without leaves. Upon this John has built, also with

his own hands, a low tier of shelves, the work of one evening and a fret saw. It is not a conventional piece of furniture, it is n't even "Eastlake" in design, but is so hospitable and convenient that it has a beauty all its own.

By way of wall-decoration in the dining-room, there is a wide frieze of plain red paper, on which is depicted the most extraordinary procession of men and animals since the flood. In fact, it is supposed to represent that ancient but very familiar event, — Noah's ark and all the beasts and fowls and creeping things on their way to that refuge. They are cut out of black paper and pasted upon the red ground. There is no law or order in their arrangement. Each figure seems actuated by the old counsel, — every man for himself. Sister Jane has never fully decided whether to consider this frieze artistic or irreverent. If inclined to use a similar style of decoration she would probably choose a different theme.



NOAH'S ARK.

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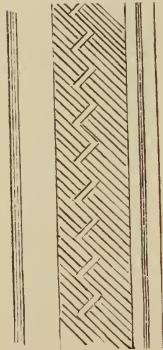
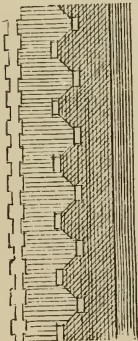
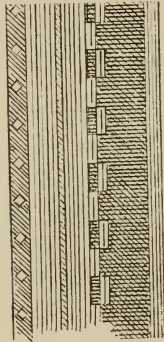
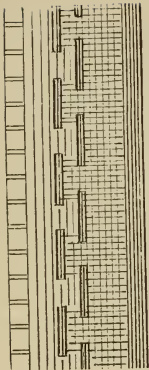
John declares it to be the only economical thing about the house. The guests look at the pictures and forget to eat their dinner.

The bride was interested in some of the details of the family room, which has a "hand-made" border, a fret cut from blue flock paper, lying on a buff ground,—and outlines of caps over the doors and mirrors. These are traced by a narrow stripe of dark brown and gilt paper, and have medallion heads in the centres. The hand-made borders have several advantages over the "ready-made." They may be much cheaper, they afford unlimited opportunity for originality in design, and it is possible to produce with them more striking effects as well as greater simplicity.

Instead of a single mirror in a heavy frame suspended from the wall by a string, which is liable to break any moment and cause a death in the family, there are two, one at each side of the broad window. They are set flat against the

wall, and cased precisely like the doors and windows in the room. In front of each one is a small, low table or large bracket for the inevitable pincushion and other toilet-articles. These brackets or tables are permanently attached to the wall, and are provided each with a drawer underneath. Before the window and between the little tables stand a couple of chairs and a footstool covered with chintz. The chairs are somewhat singular in design, and John declares that he made the framework of all three articles out of an empty soap-box in just five minutes. If he had said twenty-five I should have believed him as to the time, but the footstool alone is larger than any soap-box I ever saw. Of course, they are exceedingly simple, and the chairs as well as the footstool are decidedly "on the square." Yet the group is by no means ungraceful.

Some of Mrs. John's wall-decorations are unique, to say the least. One room is girt



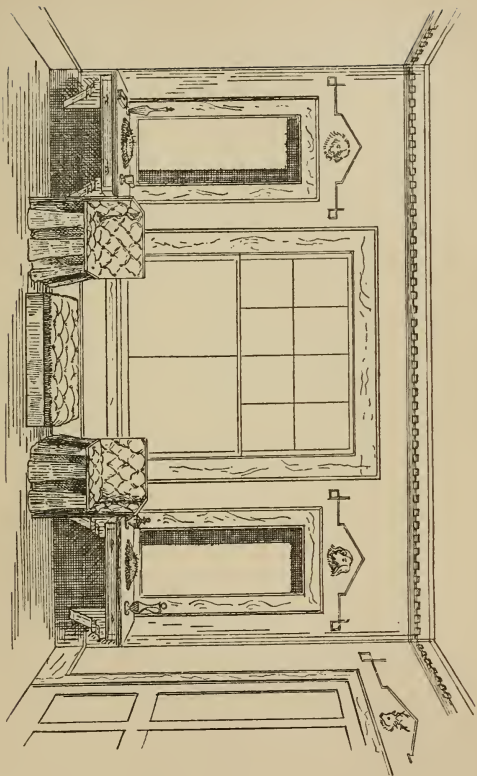
BORDERS OF PLAIN PAPER.

around with a zone of charcoal sketches on the bare white plastering. This belt is about two feet wide, and the walls above and below it are papered. In another, clusters of grains and tall grasses bend from the corners and beside the windows. These are so true to nature, in form, that the apparent skill displayed in sketching them was a source of great astonishment, until it was explained that they are simply copies of the actual forms of the objects which they represent. The shadows are thrown upon the walls and fastened there by a brush dipped in india-ink. They could not be otherwise than true. The black ghosts of leaves and ferns are also caught and grouped about in various places where pictures could not well be hung.

The bride urged me to prescribe colors for the different rooms of her house, but, while this is one of the most important points, and one of the most difficult to decide, its decision especially

belongs to her. She would not think of asking me to choose the color of her gowns! In the neutral tints is safety as to glaring sins, but danger of the negative fault of dulness. Her low rooms, more than high ones, will need the life of bright, strong colors. But here, too, there is a middle course of comparative safety, which consists in following the well-known harmonies and contrasts without attempting unusual and delicate combinations. These should not be introduced except by a master. A composition of Wagner's may be more exquisite and wonderful than an old English choral, but the latter skilfully rendered will be far more agreeable than an incompetent, blundering execution of the former.

On our return I bestowed my benediction upon the young couple, and also, being in a liberal mood, two parcels of advice as follows: "Firstly, my friends, be honest and independent.



SAFE MIRRORS AND PAPER CAPS.

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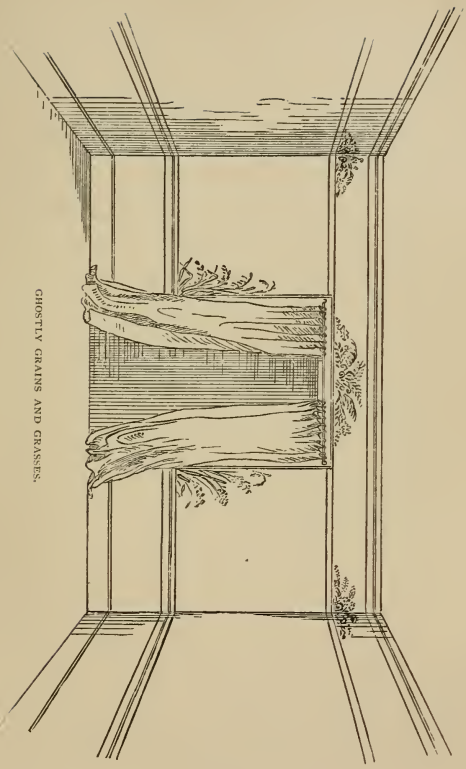
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Do not attempt to force upon your quaint, old house an appearance of newness, or to hide its venerable peculiarities by bright, new-fashioned, self-conscious finishing and furnishing. The one thing needful in your home is the manifest presence of harmony and fitness. If you are the happy owners of a genuine Murillo or Rembrandt, a carved Chinese bedstead, or any other kind of a white elephant, you may well set aside an entire apartment for its sole use and behoof. But in general, though there may be a climax of elegance in a single object or feature, the finest sentiment will dictate a close equality in the various elements that form and fill each room. Tall furniture under low ceilings, big furniture in small rooms, mahogany chairs standing beside sheet-iron stoves, lace curtains sweeping above ingrain carpets, wide picture-frames covered with shining gold-leaf, and coarse, cheap, gaudy paper behind them, heavy hard-wood

dados supporting a white plastered wall, polished marble shelves bearing common glass lamps and tin candlesticks,—there is nothing lovely, nothing comfortable even, in such combinations. Far better would it be to sell all the rich material and buy poor in exchange, if by so doing you can secure the nobler element of harmony.

“ These general features that are subject more or less to economic and constructive conditions being determined, the further details of form, fabric, and color afford endless scope for fancy and for study. To a great extent they are matters of individual feeling, like the color of the gown, but they must not be left to chance. Neither is it safe to affirm that a strong liking on your part for certain things proves their right to be. Yet it might sometimes be wise to allow a man to outgrow his own crude taste even by indulging it, rather than to insist upon his ac-

GHOSTLY GRAINS AND GRASSES.



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cepting the verdict — to him incomprehensible — of a higher culture. I say it might be wise, if no one suffered from his blindness but himself.

“ Secondly, and finally, be modest and patient. Learn to labor and to wait. Slow work is not always good, but nothing very good was ever done in a hurry. Don't attempt too much or too fine work. Better is a dinner of herbs with a good appetite than a stalled ox when one is choking with wrath and evil passions. Any simple, quiet thing that you understand and appreciate, which fills its place, but never crowds and gives satisfaction without reference to what it cost in time or money, is better than a costly, unappreciated magnificence. It may be a zone of color, a shape or a shadow, a part of the room itself or something of its contents.

“ Do not fear to imitate what pleases you if you are sure it is worth copying, for the selecting from worthy models and adapting to your own

use what others have originated requires much fine discrimination and common-sense. I am much mistaken, however, if you do not find your highest delight in this direction, in work planned by your own head and executed by your own hands, even after the manner of our friend Mrs. John, who, as you have just seen, has made her house delightful by means quite original, simple, and economical of all, save her own time and thought."

"But *I* never can do such things," said the youthful bride with a sigh.

"You can learn," replied her husband with sublime masculine faith, not only in the unlimited ability, but in the life-long leisure of his better half.

"Perhaps, if I have nothing else to do," was the doubtful response.

"This aroused Sister Jane, who proceeded to give an address upon woman's place in the uni-

verse, the substance of which was that it is her paramount duty to make her own house interesting and attractive. That few would lack either the opportunity or ability to do this if half the care and labor were given to such endeavors that are wasted in efforts to learn and follow fashions in dress. That these efforts in the way of fashion *are* wasted, because even at the end of a life devoted to them there is, in consequence of this devotion, no real improvement in artistic perception, no purer taste, no increased love of genuine fine art. That, on the other hand, the crudest attempt to beautify their homes by an humble and earnest seeking for true principles of art is sure to lead to a higher and nobler life, and that the very dissatisfaction which follows imperfect work is a sign of growth infinitely more to be desired than the complacent content of fashionable ignorance.



BY WAY OF APPENDIX.

HOW JOHN'S HOUSE WAS PAINTED.

DEAR JOHN,— You remember how valiantly I fought your architectural battles for you when your air-castle was brought down to terra firma? Now I want a favor in return. Tell me, in a plain, unvarnished tale, the story of your actual operations in painting the outside of your house. A pound of experience is worth a ton of theory. Give me the benefit of yours, but not for myself alone. To those who ask me for advice on this interesting subject, instead of laying down rules and regulations, and trying to give verbal descrip-

tions of the indescribable, to wit, of color, I want to be able to say: "Behold John! see him and his house." That you have made a bright and shining example of yourself, I do not doubt. Now tell me all about it. Let your light shine. Don't exaggerate, or set down aught in malice. Don't hesitate to confess your errors; mistakes are our best teachers. Don't speculate and philosophize, but give me all the facts you have gathered while doing the work, and describe as concisely as possible the total result.

Sincerely yours.

MY DEAR ARCHITECT,—It's facts you want, is it? Well, here goes. Paint and putty, like charity, cover a multitude of sins. The world is full of sins anxious to be covered, consequently the world is pretty well coated with paint. Where sin abounds, paint and putty do more abound. Sin and paint were born about the

same time. The first arbor that Adam built for fig-trees and Catawba grape-vines was probably painted white, though the ark is the first human habitation known to have been painted. "Thou shalt paint it within and without with paint." (Gen. vi. 14) Some versions read "pitch" instead of "paint," but the original Hebrew, which is here translated "pitch," means boiled linseed oil and English red lead. This proves that the ark was painted, and painted *red*. It also explains why many pious people of later generations, who don't know anything about the flood, except by hearsay, paint their old arks red. Others, still more modern, prefer their red paint and their piety in streaks, narrow streaks at that. Of these I shall speak further by and by.

I never saw Noah's ark, either, but have always had a fancy for these old red farm-houses. So, one day, without consulting Mrs. John, I brought home a gallon of oil, some ver-

milion, a whitewash-brush, and a step-ladder, and prepared to make the second story of our house—the first you know is of stone—blush like a red, red rose. I'd got about three daubs on the house and two on the ladder, when Mrs. John came rushing out like a distracted goddess. I supposed the inside of the house was all in a blaze, and she declared she thought the outside was, and all the neighbors would think so too. So I sat down on the step-ladder, and, after a little conversation, we agreed to save the red paint to make streaks with, and to paint the red furniture that stands out-of-doors for our neighbors to look at. I find that sort of furniture must be painted red, or nobody knows you've got it.

Afterward we held a mutual council to decide what color of the rainbow we would adopt. To our immediate ancestors, some of whom are still extant, a white house with green blinds was in-

dispensable, the white being an emblem of purity, the green of innocence. Their churches were ditto, with now and then a tinge of yellow striking through. As to the emblematic part, that would suit our case exactly, but Mrs. John just rose in the majesty of her wrath and flatly refused to abide under a green-and-white canopy. A white house, quoth she, is a cold, dead, staring, glaring, ghastly hole in the landscape. Not a blot, — blots are sometimes careless and picturesque, — but just a hole. What if all the rocks were white marble and the earth marble dust? What if all trees were white birches, and people were always and forever wearing nothing but sheets and pillow-cases, — men, women, and children?

What and if her gowns were bleached cotton every day, and her hair like the drifted snow? For the sake of argument I remarked, with suitable solemnity, that I hoped some time to see her

SHEETS AND PILLOW-CASES.



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clad in spotless robes and waving a victorious, verdant palm, looking in fact very much like a white house with green blinds.

“If angels are composed of flat-sided cubical blocks with never a curve or a softening shadow, if their outlines are all straight lines, if their palms of victory are rectangular pieces of green pasteboard held up before their eyes, if they stand forever in one spot poking out their sharp corners till the skies of heaven ache, then I, for one, *don't* want to be an angel.” Thus Mrs. John; and she was quite right, as usual.

At this point you will note the following facts: Red houses belong to the antediluvian period. That color was adopted in former times in token of affection and respect for Noah, latterly through a vain desire to express admiration for things that were drowned out long ago. We were not prepared to make great sacrifices for Noah's sake, and our admiration for the antique is con-

finer to the intrinsically lovely. We subscribe to the ancient and honorable, but from relics old and ugly we beg to be excused. Red reminds of country school-houses, Dutch barns, and the back side of "the house where I was born." There's another objection to red; it's terribly exasperating to bulls and gobble-turkeys. Nobody wants to live in constant fear of being bombarded in his own castle by an irate brute, whether he goes on two legs or on four. Furthermore, and worst of all, red belongs to the house of Lancaster. On the other hand, white belongs to the house of York, which is just as bad. We ascertained, moreover, that the occupants of white houses with green blinds are either cold-blooded formalists, prim and precise, helpless tenants of greedy, grasping landlords, or they are, in some other way, victims of painful circumstances. We also found, and this is a very serious fact, that the congregations which

AN EXASPERATING COLOR.



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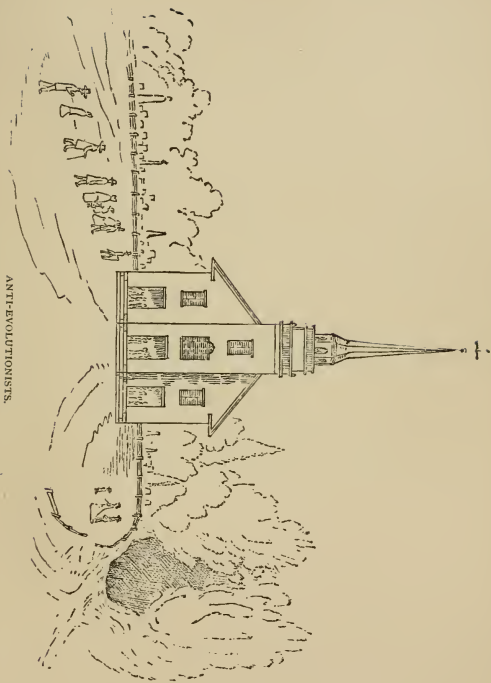
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cling to the old simon-pure white meeting-houses are invariably of the strait-laced-est, hard-shelled-est, blue-nosed-est, anti-evolution-est type. We therefore decided unanimously, after holding sweet counsel together, that, whatever else happened, our house should not be either white or red.

Then we made a tour of observation. Our travels extended over this entire community, and penetrated the most exclusive and elegant portions of our city. We intended to find the house whose color we liked best, copy the shade on the spot, take it home tenderly and make it our own. To this end we carried a supply of tubes to be squeezed, a clean piece of pine board about as big as a shelf, and a handful of brushes. White houses Mrs. John ignored utterly. She looked straight through every one, as if there was n't any house there. They *are* mighty aggravating. You can't hang a rag of fancy or sentiment or

romance to a white house. Their spick-and-span, matter-of-fact brightness is wofully dreary and commonplace. But we found plenty else. Every time we discovered anything new, we made a little patch on the board. There were washed-out blues, and faded-out pinks, demoralized yellows, and invisible greens, dirty reds, and indescribable browns. We found houses so much like a November mist that we could have walked square through them without knowing it if the day had been foggy. If I should buy Mrs. John a silk gown or a pair of five-buttoned kids of the same color that belonged originally to certain others, but which are now smeared with dust from the street, soot from the chimneys, faded by the sun and streaked by the rain, Mrs. John in her prudence would say: "Can't afford it, John, too easily soiled; besides, 't is n't suitable for an old woman, — might do for a baby." Mrs. John would be right, as usual. We noticed,

ANTI-EVOLUTIONISTS.



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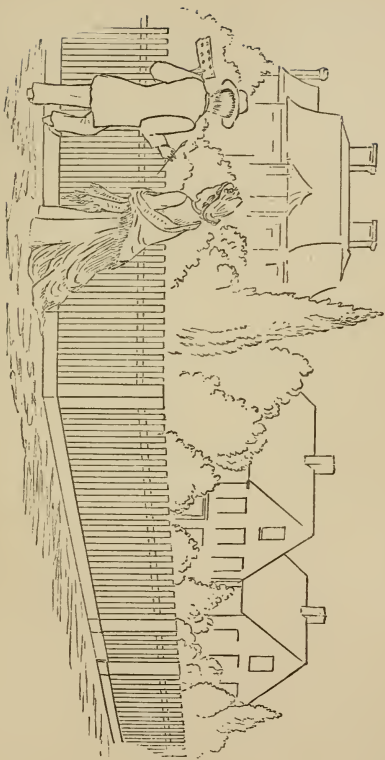
too, that, when a man has been and painted his house one of these weak and washy tints, purples and lilacs, roses and pearls, baby blues and peach-blooms, and shortly discovers, as he surely will, what a helpless thing it is, then he tries to put a little life into it by striping it with vermilion and other colors belonging to the poppy-bed.

We discovered combinations that would drive a French dressmaker crazy and cost her all her customers, and nine times out of ten the colors were bottom upward, the raised parts dark and the sunken portions light, as if the sole mission of paint-pots was to upset and nullify what little effect of light and shade there is to be found about a wooden building.

We came home sadder and wiser, and sat down to study the pine board. It looked like an "old master." There were seven hundred and forty-three dabs of color on it, not one of which we could use and be happy.

Then we sent polite letters to the manufacturers of "paints and fine colors," and became the happy owners of twenty-four packs of sample cards and much "practical" information. We had only to order number so-and-so for the body, number something else for the trimmings, another for the blinds, and the house was painted. A kind neighbor looked over the fence and said 't was all very well to order, — we might get what we wanted, and we might get the very thing we despised, and, besides, these patent colors would fade like a cotton umbrella. We knew that was n't true of all of them, but — alas! that one knave should bring discredit upon the whole fraternity of honest men — we were afraid to order. Moreover, on careful examination of the specimen cards, we discovered the origin of the samples we had collected on the pine board. We held a conference-meeting.

"The trouble is," said Mrs. John, "all these



TAKING NOTES.

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are artificial colors. Most of them are compounded of the remnants of a score or more of exhausted tin cans. No mortal could duplicate them if he tried, and no sane person would wish to if he could. We must go to nature. The first story of our house is stone; the second should be — stone-color.”

“What is stone-color?”

“Everybody knows what stone-color is. Stone-color is — stone-color.”

The argument was too deep for me. I took a hammer and brought in the testimony of the rocks. I laid out a chip of granite, a bit of old red sandstone, a fragment of blue limestone, a chunk of yellowstone from Ohio, a small slab of black slate, and a block of white marble, — these were all I could find in my quarry. Mrs. John looked at them.

“My dear, I was mistaken. It would be wrong to paint the wooden part of our house

stone-color; it would be deception. It should be wood-color."

Just then I was struck by an inspiration. It was the time of the "sere and yellow." The ground was covered knee-deep with leaves of the forest in numberless shades of brown. From the pale lemon of the whitest of the white maples, to the deep maroon of the darkest oaks, there was every conceivable intermediate tint. I brought in leaves enough to make an old-fashioned feather-bed, and we set to work assorting the colors. We began immediately after breakfast. Before candlelight we had just one thousand eight hundred and seventy-six distinct shades, hues, and tints, all of them strong, clean, healthy, natural colors, and every one of them brown. We felt that our house was as good as painted, and that night we slept the sleep of the just and the unjust.

Next morning a wolf in sheep's clothing en-



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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

tered our peaceful fold, — a cloud obscured our sunny sky, — an east-wind from the west chilled our budding hopes. The schoolmaster's wife called upon us. She announced that the color of a house ought to assimilate with that of the soil on which it stands. The body should resemble the earth when dry, and the same earth, wet, would give the proper shade for the trimmings. We were deeply impressed. Like all of Sister Jane's observations, this seemed based upon philosophy, science, and common-sense. We took a dipper of water, and went out into the middle of the road. The neighbors thought we were making mud-pies. Then we wet one side of the house to make the dry dirt stick, and plastered the mud on to the corner boards with a shingle. We retired a short distance to catch the effect; it was very striking, and Sister Jane went home.

Next day Mrs. Fred, who spends her winters

in Boston, came over. She informed us that our house should be painted a cool gray. When anybody says "cool gray" to me, I'm speechless. French gray is intelligent and very stylish,



COOL GRAYS.

but "cool gray," with a remark or two about "pure tone," strikes me dumb. I know I'm in the presence of a superior being. I think I know a gray horse, in the daytime, and I used

to have a gray hat and a drab overcoat, but, of course, these things were not to be mentioned, so I kept still.

After our visitor had gone, we reclined upon the anxious seats and had a season of inquiry. I asked Mrs. John if the dabs on the pine board were not mostly cool grays. "John," said she, "this time I've been inspired. Take the market-basket and pruning-knife, and bring me, straight from out the forest, branches of the beech and maple, of the butternut and alder, chestnut, hickory, and white birch, branches of the elm and sumac, twigs of ash and wild black cherry, twigs of oak and thorn and poplar. Lay these branches all together; lay them side by side together. At the right hand lay the white birch, at the left the wild black cherry, and the other shades between them."

I caught the brilliant idea. I gathered the sticks with the bark on. I laid them side by

side like the babes in the wood. Each stick was about as long as a lead-pencil, and as big round as a pipestem. They made a corduroy road in miniature the whole length of the sit-



BABES IN THE WOOD.

ting-room. The lightest end was white and the darkest was almost black. We never counted the shades between, but they were all gray.

The foregoing facts are at your disposal. I can't send you the total result on paper. You must come and see it.

Yours,

JOHN.

4-10

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OCT 4 - 1928

